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SLEEPLESS IN GMA?

Mel Tiangco, Mike Enriquez deliver up-to-the-minute news in '24 Oras'
STARTING TONIGHT

■ Lifestyle
Shock cinema of faith and gore

■ Metro / A23
Jiro youngest ever to win as best actor

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GMA, soap star

Unang Buyan / A24
May pag-asa pa ba si Roco?

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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Even with Tito around, 'Da King' won't debate

By Carlos Pablo

IT'S still "no."

Even with Vice President Teofisto "Tito" Guingona Jr. as the latest addition to the ingenio handlers, Fernando Poe Jr. is not changing his mind about snubbing the presidential debates.

Speaking to reporters in Cagayan de Oro

PAGE A10

Ping to ask FPJ: Be my VP

Man who exposed tax scam now a suspect

By Michelle V. Ramos

A GOVERNMENT official, who blew the whistle on a newly discovered P24-million tax credit scam, found himself the accused after he was implicated in the anomaly.

"It's really unfair," was all that Ernesto Hamoy could say after learning of the latest development in the case.

Hamoy, executive director of the One Stop Shop Tax Credit and Duty Drawback Center (OSSC) of the Department of Finance, said the bureau is not subjected to most reports that he and several members of his staff were being charged by the National Bureau of Investigation of illegal involvement in the tax scam.

"We were the ones who discovered and exposed the scam. If we were party to it, we could just have kept quiet," he said.

Hamoy was referring to the sale in April last year of P24 million worth of fake tax credit certificates (TCCs) in the name of Rohm Electronics Inc. to two companies, both of which used the TCCs in the payment of their taxes.

The NBI filed charges last week against Hamoy and other OSSC staff for their alleged failure to stop the transfer of the fake TCCs.

Hamoy, who faces possible suspension or dismissal because of the charges against him, said he and his staff uncovered the tax scam after conducting an investigation on dubious TCCs that were brought to his office last year.

He said that in May last year, the OSSC received a request from a provincial buyer to certify TCCs worth about P20 million which were reportedly issued by Rohm Electronics Inc. The papers turned out to be fake so the OSSC did not issue a certification.

The discovery of the spurious TCCs, Hamoy said, prompted the OSSC to investigate other TCC issuances involving Rohm Electronics in the past to determine if they were also fraudulent.

PAGE A10

JULES-ASSUNTA WEDDING
To the amusement of the crowd, Rep. John Lesaca (center) is kissed by bride, actress Assunta de Rossi, at the end of their Sunday wedding at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City. President Macapagal and Speaker Jose de Venecia led the sponsors.

PHOTO BY EDWIN BACASMAS

Senate bet says Erap involved in unity bid

By Norman Bordadora and Carlos Pablo

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson hopes to win actor Fernando Poe Jr. to his side when they meet tomorrow for talks to unite the opposition under one standard-bearer.

Pressed if he would ask Poe to be his running mate, Lacson said: "Let it develop up to our conversation. If it develops in our conversation, then that's it."

A source close to the senator told the Inquirer that Lacson would ask Poe to be his vice president.

Lacson said last week that Poe could easily withstand Sen. Nick de Castro for the vice presidency while he would readily defeat the other presidential candidates, including incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo. De Castro is the running mate of Ms Macapagal.

But Poe said he wanted to have Lacson on the side of the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kaunlaran (Koalisyon ng Tapat sa Bayan) if he expressed support for the actor's presidential bid.

"I had it [Campaign Spokesperson] announced as a way of verification, [that] that stays," Poe told reporters in Cagayan de Oro City on Saturday. "We must be together now."

In a telephone interview yesterday when he took his customary Sunday off from the campaign trail, Lacson said: "That is also my objective. I also want to note him on my side."

Aside from trying to win Poe over, Lacson said he had nothing specific in mind to ask the movie actor. Still, the senator said he had already made up his mind to go on with his presidential bid despite the withdrawal of Senate President Franklin Drilon.

"I've always said that there is no other way but straight ahead [toward my presidential bid]," Lacson said.

Despite trailing Ms Macapagal, Poe and Alyansa ng Pag-asa presidential candidate Raul Roco in recent surveys, Lacson believes he can win the presidency because of the response he has been receiving from the public in his provincial sorties.

PAGE A11

Fight terrorism, poverty, cadets told

By Frank Cimatu and Vincent Cabreza
PhilStarNews Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday called on the members of the Philippine Military Academy's Maliyak Class of 2004 to become the "true Israelis"—fighting the war on insurgency and terrorism with the right, and the war on poverty with the left.

"We are fighting the war on two fronts," the President said in her 14-minute speech before the 129-member graduating class and their parents at the College Assistance Plan-John Hay Trails and Cultural Center here.

Giving the breakdown of four consecutive failures in Spratly on March 23, Ms Macapagal said her administration could never "let our guard down" against terrorists.

"The tragedy in Madrid is another scourge that we should work not only nationally but globally. We should work outside our shores to the universal task," she said.

Ms Macapagal said that under her administration, the government has been able to "neutralize" the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Jemaah Islamiyah and the Rajah Solaiman Movement.

A BIG kiss from the top graduate's mother Erlinda, while his father Roque looks on.

Rape kits could tell the true story

DR. Ma. Corazon de Jesgis shows the contents of a provincial rape investigation kit.

By Ma. Cora P. Dayo

WHO you just raped? Do you know someone who was just raped? Are you a victim, a relative of the victim, a counselor, a law enforcer, a law practitioner, a health worker, a women's rights advocate, a concerned citizen?

Aside from reporting the crime or getting the facts of a rape case, what else should you do to preserve the evidence that could lead to the resolution of the crime?

If you're a fan of Det Mackenzie TV show "CSI" (Crime Scene Investigation), you know that the phrase "shred of evidence" could mean a whole cache, thanks to modern science and technology. But David Caruso and his team can't do much with their high tech lab machines and magnifying if they have no crime scene samples to work on.

A rape kit could definitely throw shreds of evidence, microscopic they may be, that could give victims of the crime name and the profiles of the guilty.

It is light, handy cheap and easy to use. It's all in one big envelope.

If it could be studied, rape kits should be available to as many individuals and agencies as the helping professions to prevention. Rape kits could spell the difference between justice and an justice and could lead to the speedy crime resolution for the victims, the guilty and the community as well.

Dr. Ma. Corazon A. De Jesgis, a multi-awarded neurocirurgeon more than 20s, was among the many participants who set up exhibit booths at the recent World Bank-sponsored "Thanksgiving Forum," the first Philippine "development intervention marketplace" that showcased more than a hundred NGO and people's organizations (POs) from the hoping to earn and get funding.

Dr. Jesgis's group, the 2006 Analysis Laboratory of Natural Sciences Institute of the University of the Philippines, was among the more than 50 winners. Her group's winning project proposal: "Incorporating DNA Fingerprint in the Forensic Examination of Asserted Cases in the Philippines."

Winning translated into P1 million, not a windfall really but it would go a long way.

PAGE A11

Madrid blast again rouses world to condemn terrorism

By Amando Doronila

SPAIN wept over the deaths of 200 people who were killed Thursday in a rush hour bombing of four commuter trains in the heart of Madrid in the most intensive attack in Europe. More than 1,500 people were wounded in what was described as an extension of the "Age of Terror."

ANALYSIS

More than 11 million people, a quarter of Spain's population of 42 million, took to the streets in the weekend under drenching rain to show their grief and fury over the bombings. They marched under a canopy of umbrellas.

Nothing exposed the depth and breadth of the grief of the Spanish people more vividly than a 20-year-old

PAGE A12

Dating thru Internet goes partner-specific

"Will you looking for a special someone who shares your love of nature, animals and who doesn't eat meat? Join sundancing.com. Your future vegetarian partner may be just a few clicks away. . ."

If you're tired of the usual, boring Internet dating, there are more interesting, edgier sites popping at the fringes.

PAGE A8

Second FRONTPAGE

Madrid blast victim: A dutiful boy

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
INQUIRER Luzon Bureau

SAGAY, Isabela—Relatives in Sinsinag City, Isabela, who remember Ben Reynaldo Ferrer as a hardworking and dutiful boy were devastated by the news of his death as a result of the train bombings in Madrid on March 11.

Normalyn Ferrer Quitadaje, 44, said Ferrer, her 32-year-old nephew, had told relatives here that he wanted to celebrate his 33rd birthday in September in Isabela.

Instead of that joyful reunion, Quitadaje said, the clan was now awaiting the arrival of Ferrer's remains, which will be accompanied by his parents Arturo and Aleta.

The Ferrer couple went to Spain 15 years ago and left Ferrer and his sister Liezl to the care of relatives in Isabela.

In 2000, Ferrer and Liezl joined their parents in Basque, about 50 kilometers from Madrid, Spain.

Ferrer, a waiter at a restaurant in Madrid, was on his way to attend service as an Iglesia ni Cristo chapel when the train he took was bombed.

The attacks on Thursday morning left 200 people dead and more than 1,400 wounded when 10 bombs were set off on commuter trains in the Spanish capital.

Two Moroccans and two Indians were arrested late Saturday in connection with the bombings. The terrorist group al-Qaida claimed responsibility for the blasts in an Arab-language television tape. (See related story on page A19.)

"Ben family was planning to go home in September to take a vacation and celebrate his birthday. But the blasts happened. This is so heartwrenching," Quitadaje said.

Safety of 50 bridges checked

OBSTACLE COURSE
Quezon Blue Jet commandos Nino Peoples's Army-challenge training on their jungle hideout in Liongo, Surigao del Sur, in preparation for more attacks despite ongoing peace negotiations.

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

MALACAÑANG has ordered a safety review of more than 50 ongoing bridge projects in the country following the collapse of two bridges in just over a month.

The decades-old Bamba Bridge in Candelaria, Pampanga, the only link of thousands of farmers to the town center and to Bataan, crumbled on March 7 under the weight of a truck carrying gravel and sand.

In Ilalim province, the 90-meter Bued Bridge collapsed on Feb. 8, a day before it was to be inaugurated by President Macapagal-Arroyo. Construction of the P 30-million structure started in 2002 but was allegedly rushed in time for the election season.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in an interview with DBN radio that Ms Macapagal-Arroyo prepared to look into the cases of the poorly constructed bridges, and determine who should be held liable for the damages.

Bunye said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) should conduct the review to ensure that the bridges constructed in the provinces are structurally sound, and therefore safe for public use.

Malacañang's move was a response to Kalinga Rep. Lawrence Wharton's appeal for the immediate investigations of the Pasil and Candaba bridges.

Wharton also proposed the review, which he said should cover the more than 20 projects reportedly that appear sinking due to floods. At least three of those are in Metro Manila—La Huerta Bridge in Parañaque City, Estella Bridge in Muntinlupa City and Sala-Sanchez Bridge in Valenzuela.

Planning urged Malacañang as part of its evaluation, to look into the possible effect of the country's fault lines on the new bridges.

Heads of the Japanese-funded Metropolitan Manila Earthquake Impact Reduction Study (MMEIRS), expected to be released this month, could help authorities in their assessment, the lawmaker said.

As a result of the Bamba Bridge collapse, Candaba's one thousand some have to take a 25-km detour, one route to reach the poblacion, or town center, where the mills are. In the 15 villages that comprise what local folk call the "Tapang Taas" — Pugad" — including Barangay San Agustin, where the attractive wood—many have put poised harvesting their palay until the bridge is repaired, according to farmer Conrado Dagsan.

Until last Saturday, the prohibition was less than 3 km away from these villages. But in the past four days, residents had to pass the circuitous alternative route of mostly rough roads.

Dagsan said about a dozen other farmers tried to minimize the ruined 20-meter bridge with bamboo poles. But the task proved too dangerous, with the water under the bridge reaching almost five feet high.

"Wala na kasi ito, eh. Our very livelihood has been put at risk," Dagsan lamented. The farmers are hoping that an ongoing temporary restoration work would allow them to use the structure even on a limited basis.

Bamba Bridge, although made of thick reinforced concrete, had been propped up only by wood, limiting its capacity to ten tons. Mayor Nemesio Bengzon said the 10-wheeled truck that last crossed it damaged a central beam that 35 tons of gravel and sand.

Bengzon has since fined the owner of the truck as Pasay Councilor John Ray Gamboa.

The driver, Ramon Bautista, had sought custody with the local police, for fear that the villagers would lynch him.

It was his first time to pass the bridge, Bautista said. He had come from nearby Balanga in Bataan, where he picked up the load.

The Bautista insisted that Gamboa had not been questioned or asked to pay the damages. The councilor could not be reached for comment.

2 more bodies recovered from ferry

By Tarra Quismundo

TWO more bodies were recovered yesterday from the A deck of the ill-fated SuperFerry 14 passenger ship in Manicaldo, Bataan.

All in all, 91 passengers and nine members of the ferry have been confirmed dead while 82 are still missing. More than 900 of those on board the ship have been accounted for, according to Philippine Coast Guard Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo.

Teams from the Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Navy and Bureau of Fire Protection also recovered two more huge lift of body parts.

The ship, which was carrying 899 passengers and crew members, was on its way to Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro, As dawn of Feb. 27, fire hit the ship while off Corregidor Island, allegedly following an explosion. The 10,000-ton ship, was lying on its starboard side, was later towed to Mariveles, Bataan.

Tamayo said search and recovery teams were sweeping through a small area of the A deck, which is still covered with debris. The Multinational Transpo Company hired by Aboitiz Transport System Corp., will need between two to three days to clear the A deck of remaining debris.

Aside from the debris, searchers and cadaver space in the A deck have hampered recovery operations. The search and recovery teams work from 8 a.m. and stop two hours after the weather is bad.

"While we want to work 24 hours, the strong winds and ocean swells at night make the operation difficult and risky," Tamayo said.

"Besides, only a few people at a time could work inside the ship," he added.

A parallel board of marine inquiry recently looked into the ship's gas pipeline and the welding work in its air-conditioning system as possible causes of the fire. The board will meet in the next few days.

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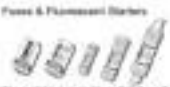

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Bro. Eddie favors debt moratorium

By Blanche S. Rivera

CEBU CITY—Bro. Eddie Villanueva is not only open to the idea of raising the country's debt but also to a moratorium on foreign debt payments for the next three to five years.

Villanueva, a former professor of economics and finance, said the Philippines needed a breather from debt service, which accounts for 37 percent of the annual budget, to help spur economic growth. He said civil war might erupt if the people's basic needs are not addressed by the government.

The proposal of another presidential candidate, actor Fernando Poe Jr., to renegotiate the country's debts unsettled markets last week.

Villanueva's economic platform, yesterday, that a government under him would have the "fourth commandment" to negotiate only creditors to allow a substantial reduction in or suspension of debt service.

"The debt service should [be] one the only capitalists are surrounded by traditional politicians who have earned undesirable reputations from armchair economists. It is the politicians who have earned the incredible disinvestment of this country," Villanueva said in an interview at the Jesus Is Lord church in Bonifacio Drive.

Carlos Rubio, former chief of the National Economic and Development Authority and one of Villanueva's economic advisers, noted that P4 out of every P6 in revenue of the national government went to debt service, leaving pp money that should could have been spent on infrastructure and social services.

The Philippines has an outstanding debt of P5.6 trillion. A study by the Center for Research Information shows that every Filipino owes the creditors, but an average debt of around P40,000.

Villanueva said that foreign creditors had been considerate of the appeals of countries like Indonesia, Chile and Poland for debt restructuring. But these same creditors have not extended the same consideration to the Philippines because they know Bro. Eddie is one of the most corrupt governments in the world, according to the evangelist.

"Some of the loans just went to the pocket of crooks. ... We never to restore the moral dignity of this nation to the international community," he said.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

NOT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL
But you can do something about it.
The Enlarger Pump for More of a Man.

BIG Bull Barako defender gang up on Dorian Peña in the game last night.

Lethal Long powers SanMig

By Jaime Nisperos

SOMEBODY stop him.

Mr. Long mocked all defenders thrown at him last night as he powered San Miguel Beer to a resounding 86-71 decision over Red Bull Barako in the Gin Kings' PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I know they will come at me, shoot me, hit me with dirty shots and try to get me out of my game. It's hard mentally but as long as we stay together as a team, I don't feel any pain [or strapped]," said Long after the Beermen's fourth straight victory to an iron pattern.

Hulking at 6-foot-8, Long proved unstoppable yet again to the chagrin fans, shooting 27 points and hauling down 20 rebounds in a power, almost no-relief performance.

The former Seattle Supersonics power forward made life easier for the rest of the Beermen as well.

As the Red Bull defense concentrated on Long in the paint, Olsen Racela, Jondan Ubaldo and Larry Rodriguez ran them down from the outside, stabbing the Bermen about invincible at silhouette on the floor.

"We has been the pillar of the team's offense and defense. As long as together when things aren't going well," said San Miguel Beer coach Ang Victoria.

Dennis Hasp carried the scoring load at the height of the Bombers' final quarter rally but the Beermen, playing versus Danny Seigle (no 11 a sprained right ankle, could not be stopped with Long in the floor.

In the second game, Mark Sanford extended 43 points as Coca-Cola whipped Barangay Ginebra, 93-84. The Tigers improved to 3-1, while the Gin Kings fell to 2-2.

The Bombers, who absorbed their second defeat in four games, looked as if they played without an expert in Doug Wrenn, Red Bull's third import this conference, shooting by firing blanks.

Wrenn, who replaced Bingo Merino, went scoreless in the final canto and finished with 12 points on top of nine rebounds and one block.

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Ping to ask FPJ: Be my VP

From page A1

Poe said Mr Ma's group ran neck-and-neck in the surveys. Getting Lacson to support his candidacy may give the numbers to help the late national President, who is seeking a bid six years later.

Poe said that he and Lacson would meet to reserve for what he hoped would be the final meeting for the unification of the opposition. The active exchanges for use Lacson endorsed this meeting.

"This came about through a third person [who said] 'what do you think of LL meeting on Tuesday?' I said I said] why not?" Poe said.

Estrada factor

Opposition senatorial candidate Ramon Revilla said that deposed President Joseph Estrada was "actively involved in uniting the opposition."

Revilla did not say whether Estrada was the broker of the Tuesday meeting but expressed confidence that Poe and Lacson would "eventually unite."

Asked if the meeting would be the final round of conference talks, Poe said: "Hopefully, hopefully."

Poe was interviewed hours after he and Gazmin held a press conference in Calamba City, ending their political silence.

Lacson has been firing broadsides against the Poe camp since the start of the presidential campaign on Feb. 11, even declaring that he is no longer interested in unification.

But Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, said their camp would no longer hit back at Lacson, an indication that unification was in the works.

"Who knows he [Lacson] may eventually end up as an ally," Legarda said.

Poe's campaign manager Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III said Lacson's leaders were not hurting the Poe camp.

"We can actually coexist [etc]," Sotto said in Filipino.

Common friend

Lacson said he and Poe's camp had set the meeting at 4:30 p.m. in the house of a "common friend" in southern Metro Manila.

Poe and members of his camp were not supposed to divulge the meeting with Lacson, but the senator's group had leaked the schedule to the media.

"I [meeting a leaker] was supposed to be discarded," Poe said. "But since he [Lacson] did it [leaked], then we cheer it."

"We're going to meet and [the two supposedly classified as it was supposed to be between the two of us," Poe added.

Asked what he was up about Lacson's premature revelation of the Tuesday meeting, Poe said: "I can't answer that."

"The senator can answer that," Poe said of Lacson.

Lacson is scheduled to go to Subic province today and is expected to be back in Metro Manila tomorrow for a series of the campaign period's last major political events to occur with Poe in the afternoon.

Ex-Cagayan de Oro ambassador opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said that leaving Gazmin in the opposition was like leaving a "hostage in a cocktail set to fly to the moon."

"Mr. [Eliot] Ness always [said leaving the people and never leave hostages with] Capone's electoral [haven] like a rocket ship that can't be recovered," Pimentel said.

At the very least, according to the source, the presence of Gazmin is a "psychological plus factor."

Herrera said the support of Gazmin's province by the opposition would be more felt as Mrs. Gloria retains the Vice President's hold.

"In the last Social Weather Stations survey, [Gloria] had 47 [percent of the votes in the whole of Mindanao as against [FPJ's] 28.9 percent," Herrera said. "Gazmin's defense can't fill up [FPJ's landslide victory in Mindanao."

The Poe/Lacson source said that based on the voter survey, Poe and Mr Mamapagal were statistically tied only in Northern Mindanao, which is Gazmin's region.

Not a lure

But Senator Pimentel Franklin Drilon said the departure of Gazmin from the administration camp was no big loss.

"It's good media copy but it's not a loss in real political terms," he said in separate interviews.

Drilon said Gazmin would not be luring many people to the opposition camp because even in the latter's province and region in Mindanao, the people were divided between the forces of the Vice President and Senator Lacson, former governor of Misamis Oriental and now mayor of Cagayan de Oro.

Drilon said Lacson, a supporter of Mr Mamapagal, was the "recognized political leader" over there.

"President Macapagal-Arroyo will carry Misamis and Cagayan de Oro with the help of Lacson," he said.

Drilon, who chairs the Liberal Party, said the only thing surprising about Gazmin's transfer to the camp of Poe was that it came only now. With a report from the wires of Inquirer

Detainees root for Roco

By Michael Lim Ubac

SAN MATEO, Nueva Ecija—Inmates of the provincial jail yesterday pledged their support for Alyansa ng Pag-asa standard-bearer Raul Roco and his running mate Loren Legarda.

Jose Eleazar Deguito, the leader of the almost 200 inmates detained here for various offenses, warmly welcomed Roco, Aquino and senatorial candidates Frank Chavez, Edwin Jones, Jay Sonza, Melanio Mercurio, Senator Gamaliel, Bong Coo and Perfecto Tiongco during their visit here.

Deguito told reporters later that only Roco would effect genuine change in the country.

"We are wholeheartedly supporting him," he said.

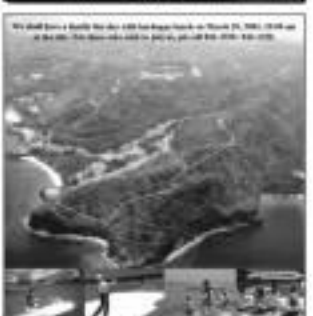
When asked about their movie idol, Fernando Poe Jr., Deguito burst into laughter and said: "We are not fond of movie stars."

Deguito said that although Poe was popular, the country would be better off with Roco than another actor in Malacañang.

He said inmates had already learned their lesson that only qualified and competent candidates should occupy elected posts.

Deguito expressed hope the electorate would not commit the mistake of voting for Poe, a known buddy of detained ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Nueva Ecija ex-Gov. Rodolfo Iglesparo, who is running for Congress, was himself imprisoned by the same complaint the inmates accused the Alyansa candidates.



Dating thru Internet goes partner-specific

For instance, cosdating.com is for the sexually minded.

Lovemeetsmore is for people who take their politics seriously but don't take themselves too seriously. The website describes itself as "Political. Personals" or "Dating Sin. The Agitated," and has a picture of US presidential candidate John Kerry playing ping-pong on its homepage.

Then there is www.elitedating.com which offers a quantifier experience that mimics real life.

Therapydex.com uses mental health professionals as matchmakers, such as Dr. Fred.

For men who can't find a match even at these dating sites, a new option has emerged: imaginary girlfriends. For a fee, men can sign up at imaginarygirlfriends.com or www.yourimaginarygirlfriend.com.

The website touts "A real life girl will pretend to be your long-distance girlfriend, by sending you personalized love letters, emails, pictures, even faxes phone messages ... This relationship appears real to others, but it is not. There will be no actual real life meetings or a relationship between you and your imaginary Girlfriend other than that specified in your order."

Those who are asked if single men looking for romance without commitment, or those wanting to prove to their friends or family—or ex-girlfriend—that they have a new love interest.

Go figure.

The New York Times News Service

Man who exposed tax scam now a suspect

True enough, the DOE found that some P24 million worth of fake TCCs in the name Robin Electronics were sold to Nissan Bicycle Corp. and Splash Manufacturing Corp. Nissan and Splash used the TCCs to settle their tax obligations, thus, resulting in the government losing P24 million in revenues.

Task Force 156

"The OSS was at the forefront of two successful entrapment operations which led to the arrest of five individuals involved in this multibillion-peso scam. It was Director Kimson instrumental in obtaining bank documents to establish where the proceeds of the criminal activity went," said Moreno.

Kimson said the charges against his subordinates, including Legal Team 1, stemmed from the June 2003 report of Task Force 156, which recommended that Kimson and OSS members be spared of the charges.

Task Force 156 is an inter-agency committee created by Malacañang to investigate and file cases against syndicators involved in the fake TCCs.

"We act of misfeasance is impossible to Mr. Kimson or any other unscrupulous personnel of the OSS. Hence, DOE, which can even be remotely considered as constituting an institutional negligence" and "gross misconduct" should not be allowed to prosper," said Legal Team 1 in a legal opinion.

The NBI, however, insisted that after a thorough evaluation, Kimson and his staff were found guilty of negligence.

It also ignored the opinion of Legal Team 1 because it was not convincing and decided to file the charges.

Lawyer Jose Justiniano, chief of the NBI anti-graft division, urged Moreno to make his defense before the Office of the Ombudsman if he believes he is not guilty.

"We have a strong case. We would not recommend the filing of charges against Kimson and his staff if we do not believe they are liable to the extent," Yap said in a telephone interview.

Demoralizing

The OSS staff decried the charges against Kimson and some of their colleagues in the DOE saying it was demoralizing that the very people who are exposing the tax evaders are themselves being implicated in the scam.

On Friday, the entire staff were black to protest what they branded as black propaganda against their office. "This is an indignation of the smarks being made on our office, which is being accused of anomalies while we are the ones working to expose them," said one member, who requested anonymity.

Another member said she felt frustrated that while her colleagues had been working hard to help the NBI in uncovering the scam and other cases of fraudulent tax transfers, they were even made liable for the scam.

They said they believed politics could be behind the move to implicate the OSS in the scam.

In a meeting on Wednesday, reporters who are regular claimants of tax credits expressed fear that the move to implicate Kimson in the scam was intended to implicate him with somebody who has connection with tax syndicates.

Saying they have "confidence" in the integrity of the OSS, the reporters said they supported that the charges against Kimson could be meant to silence him from further exposing fraudulent tax credit swindles.

As head of the OSS, Kimson has witnessed various fraudulent tax credit cases, including the P3.2 billion tax credit scam involving the Chingkee group of companies.

GLOBE TELECOM

NOTICE OF REGULAR ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the regular annual stockholders' meeting of GLOBE TELECOM, INC. will be held at the Mandarin Ballroom, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati Avenue, Makati City on MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2004 at 9:00 A.M. with the following

AGENDA

1. Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Annual Report of Officers
4. New Business
   - 4.1 Ratification of all Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors and Management adopted in the ordinary course of business during the preceding year.
   - 4.2 Reduction of the number of directors from 15 to 11 by further amending the Amended Articles of Incorporation and the pertinent provision in the By-Laws.
5. Election of Directors (including the Independent Directors)
6. Election of Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of 02 February 2004 shall be the stockholders entitled to vote at this meeting. As per By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Books of the Corporation will be closed from 02 to 06 February 2004, inclusive.

Mandaluyong City, 05 February 2004.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(SGD.)
RENATO G. MARZAN
Corporate Secretary

Habitat for Humanity launches 'Youth Build 2004' project

By Bernadia Pareño
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SAN PEDRO, Laguna—The Habitat for Humanity in Asia and the Philippines launched here on Saturday the "Youth Build 2004" project which would construct houses for the poor and build bridges between the underprivileged and the privileged communities in the country.

Steve Rhee, vice president of the Habitat for Humanity-Asia, said the project was part of Habitat's goal to involve students, aged 15 to 25 years old, in housing projects throughout the world.

In Asia, half of the 20,000 students involved in building houses for the poor are from the Philippines. The houses being constructed are for families with an average of five members.

To date, Habitat has built over 7,000 houses in the country. At the end of 2004, it expects the number to reach 8,000, and a new office to open in 10,000 homes.

This included the visit of former US President Jimmy Carter to the Philippines in 1989 where the former US leader donated one week of his time with Habitat at the construction site.

"It was in [Bicol] where Carter was involved in made pledges in a day to cast work, my last four Filipino presidents working with Jimmy Carter on the site," Rhee said.

The launching site in Barangay United Bayanihan here has about 140 disabled homes to Most are under construction.

Francis Rivera, Habitat for Humanity-Philippines chair, said the project would relocate 427 families from the railroad tracks in Muntinlupa. The several dozen about 275 meters of railroad—the first step in the country's plan to modernize the railroad system.

Rivera said a $1 million was given to start the project.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development and the government's National Home Mortgage and Finance Corp. assisted in funding the project in partnership with the Bicol-based Development Foundation.

Habitat, a project to 20 provinces each, 20 of Filipinos or families that can't afford home-building all over the country. The goal is to put up about 1,000 houses annually this year.

Wally Bejo, 43, construction foreman in the San Pedro project, said he was among the early beneficiaries of low-cost housing in 1989.

"Now am I on a benefactor, I am ready to help Habitat wherever it needs me to work it," he said.

Bejo received a salary from his construction job, but just enough to support his family in General Santos City.

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo R. Ramos

TRAIN BLASTS IN SPAIN

Arrests, video claim point to al-Qaida

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MADRID, Spain—Authorities found a videotape claiming al-Qaida carried out the Madrid terrorist attacks, Spain's government said Sunday, hours after three Moroccans and two Indians were arrested in connection with the bombings.

Interior Minister Angel Acebes told a hastily called post-midnight news conference that authorities could not verify the veracity of the videotaped claim, which said the bombings were "a response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies" and threatened more attacks.

Acebes' announcements came after demonstrators flocked into the streets of Madrid and other cities to protest the government's response to the bombings, and just hours before polls were to open Sunday in general elections.

Some protesters accused Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar of provoking the bomb attacks Thursday in Madrid's busy Atocha by siding with US President George W. Bush in the Iraq war.

"Aznar" and "him, you kick Aznar out!" chanted almost 3,000 people protesting past midnight Sunday outside Madrid's Atocha station, where two of the four trains exploded.

"I'm now al-Qaida ... Aznar is responsible," stopped demonstrator Francisco Loyola, a computer specialist. "He was the one who backed the war that was illegal and brought Islamic terrorism on us."

At twelve Madrid rallies that also drew thousands, protesters chanted "Liars, liars!" and held signs saying, "No more coverup."

One banner read: "Aznar, because of you, we all lose."

Demonstrations also erupted in other cities Saturday night... with 6,000 gathering in the Basque city of Bilbao.

Right after Thursday's bomb attacks killed 200 people and wounded 1,500, the government blamed the Basque separatist group ETA, seen as a terrorist group a possible Islamic connection. Protesters accused the government of seeking to divert voters' attention away from its support for the Iraq war by blaming ETA.

The arrests and the videotape were the strongest indications yet of a possible Islamic link to the deadliest terrorist attack in Spanish history and Europe's worst in 13 years.

But most of the arrests of five people in connection with the bombings frustrated some demonstrators.

"It's good news," said Fernando Bermudez, a college student. "Maybe now the truth will come out. All we want is the truth."

Acebes, speaking at an earlier news conference on Saturday, said the five suspects were all arrested around Madrid and that "one might have connections with Moroccan extremist groups. But it is still very early to establish exactly what degree."

He did not name any group.

Asked whether ETA is still considered a suspect, Acebes said: "We must not rule anything out."

The five were arrested after a cell phone was found in an explosives-packed getaway bag discovered on one of the bombed trains, the minister said.

Ten Spaniards of Indian origin also were questioned for questioning but are not expected to be arrested, Acebes said.

The videotape was recovered from a trash bucket near a Madrid mosque, after an Arabic-speaking man who called a Madrid TV station said it was there, Acebes said.

"We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid," said the man on the video, according to a government translation of the statement delivered in Arabic. "It is a response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies."

The man named then the bombings came exactly 2 1/2 years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

The man, whom Acebes said was Arabic-born, concluded by saying: "This is a statement by the military spokesperson for al-Qaida in Europe, Abu Dujana al-Afghani."

Interior Ministry officials said it was unclear whether that meant the man was al-Afghani or that he was speaking in his name.

"This identity has not been corroborated either by Spanish intelligence services or by the international intelligence information services whose help we sought," said Acebes. The claim "must be taken with all caution," he stressed.

The man threatened further attacks.

"This is a response in the sense that you caused in the words and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this will be decided if God wills it," he said. "We love life and we love death."

AP

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2 GIs killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A roadside bomb killed two US soldiers newly arrived in Iraq and seriously wounded several others as they were patrolling Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit on Saturday.

An explosion in Baghdad, meanwhile, killed an Iraqi shopkeeper related to a member of the country's US-appointed GOVERNING COUNCIL.

The Tikrit blast raised to 305 the number of US soldiers killed in action since the war to overthrow Saddam was launched almost a year ago, as guerrillas continue to take their toll of occupation forces even though Saddam's rule is long gone.

Those killed were from the 1st Infantry Division and had only recently arrived in the country to replace the 4th Infantry Division, leaving Iraq after nearly a year's service.

Two other US soldiers died in a similar attack west of Baghdad on Thursday.

In Baghdad, a suspected guerrilla lobbed a lone hand grenade into a shop in a busy commercial district, killing the owner of the clothing and accessories store and injuring at least three others, local police and witnesses said.

The storekeeper was a brother-in-law of Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite Muslim member of the Governing Council, and aides to Jaafari said they believed the attack was politically motivated.

"It is to remove a political personalities, they targeted him with a bomb," said one aide, Adnan al-Janabi.

The deaths came four days after two US civilians working for the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority were killed in Iraq in a rare development that suggests insurgents may have infiltrated the US-trained police force. Reuters

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Afghan hunt for Bin Laden nets 3 Taliban commanders

SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan—Three Taliban commanders have been arrested in a US-led sweep of southeastern Afghanistan aimed at crushing members of the former regime and their al-Qaeda allies, an Afghan army officer said on Saturday.

At least 12 Taliban fighters have been killed in the week-old offensive which US officials hope will ensure al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Rebels have been active across the southern city of Zabidaul on Sunday, wounding two people, including a child, police said. Two more rockets landed in the capital, Kabul, on Saturday evening, but caused no damage or injuries.

The three Taliban commanders were arrested on Friday in a raid in Zabul province in a joint US-Afghan operation, said Gouvernor Rizab Khan, an Afghan army officer based in the southeast of the country.

US-led forces were leading a former Taliban provincial governor, Mullah Abdul Razzaq, who they sought for the murder, shortly after he was released by Mullah Mohammadullah, Mullah Sabir Mohammad and Mullah Baloch. A mullah is an Islamic cleric and many senior Taliban dominate are also.

Many weapons were seized in the raid, Khan said.

It was not clear how powerful the three captured were with US officials not immediately available to comment.

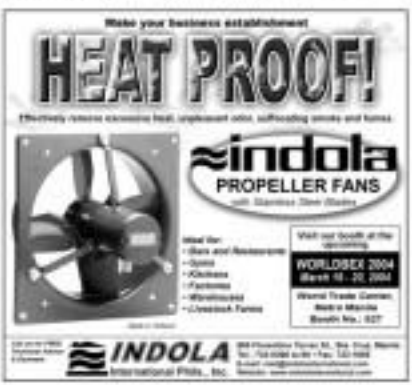
Earlier, Taliban fighters were killed in an air strike on their truck in Kandahar province on Thursday, Afghan army officers said.

They were the first reported casualties in Operation

"Mountain Storm," which began on March 7 and involves troops from the 15,000-strong US-led force based by an support.

US defense officials have described "Mountain Storm" as a broad sweep offensive to hunt down al-Qaeda fugitives, including Bin Laden.

In a separate battle in the same area, about 60 Taliban fighters attacked an Afghan army base near the Pakistan border on Friday night, Reuters



The University of Melbourne & Trinity College Foundation Studies
Free Interview Program

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UN nuke watchdog condemns Iran; sanctions loom

VIENNA—The UN nuclear watchdog condemned Iran on Saturday for withholding sensitive nuclear information in a resolution that diplomats said left open the option of UN sanctions if Tehran did not cooperate.

Iran hit back, saying the session it had suspended UN nuclear inspections on Friday was to show it to displeasure at the resolution, then in draft form. The inspections were hailed "for the time being," chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani said.

"The reason for postponing the inspections' visit was the approach of this resolution and we assumed to show that we are not satisfied," said Rohani, who had earlier said the document was "like an ugly dancer, with dangerous hums and clang teeth."

The resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "deplores" Iran's omissions of key atomic technology from its October declaration, including undeclared research on advanced "P2" centrifuges that can make bomb-grade uranium.

It said the board of governors would decide in June how to respond to the omissions—a clause that several diplomats said keeps the door open for a possible report to the UN Security Council and economic sanctions.

The resolution passed after a week of haggling over a tough text drafted by Australia and Canada and backed by Washington, which says Iran is trying to build atomic weapons. European and non-aligned states, Russia and China wanted softer wording.

A compromise was struck after the US-led camp agreed to soften some language, although US Ambassador Jeffrey Smith still said it remained a strong warning to Tehran.

"The condemnation calls for Iran to provide proactive cooperation instead of having information dragged out of it," he told reporters after the meeting.

Iran says its program is for peaceful purposes only. Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Roh forms legal team

SEOUL, South Korea—Impeached President Roh Moo-hyun began forming his legal defense team Sunday as South Korea braced for more massive anti-impeachment protests. Moon Jae-in, a former adviser on civil affairs, is charged with putting together the team that will defend Roh in the country's first ever impeachment trial, spokesperson Yoo Tae-young said. Ministers declared "the integrity of an unprecedented constitution" for his almighty influence. The Constitutional Court voted to initiate an whether the impeachment of Roh was constitutional or not. Thursday to review the case. DAEMO by noon on a "snap without gone." The opposition-controlled parliament declared the motion on Friday by incorporating Roh on charges of violating election rules and misconduct. AP

Karadzic slips net

NEAR SRAJEVO, Bosnia—Bosnian Serb police under Western pressure to arrest one of the world's most wanted war men, said they failed to find war crimes fugitive Radovan Karadzic in a large-scale operation on Saturday. "We have search had an armed ambush from a certain Bosnian Serb town or Karadzic, wanted by the United States," war crimes tribunal in The Hague, said near the town of Bratunac, a bloodbath-stained region bordering Serbia. But the daylong operation failed to net the 58-year-old accused of genocide against Muslims during the 1992-95 Bosnian war but still a win the many Serb nationalists. Reuters

Russian votes favor Putin

MOSCOW—President Vladimir Putin looked to cruise to an election on Sunday, although turnout might be high enough for a cold vote and his only real threat of voter apathy apparently evaporating after spring opposition. With voting under way across the country's 11 time zones, Russian media reported turnout in the sparsely populated east of the country had hit the 50-percent hurdle needed for the election to be valid. Also said the vote in Moscow on Sunday morning. "Vote turnout is a little higher than on Dec. 7, 2003, when the country elected deputies to the State Duma (lower house of parliament)," said Alexander Veshnyakov, head of the Central Election Commission. Reuters

SUB-TRANSMISSION ASSETS FOR SALE

As mandated by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 and based on asset disposal guidelines of the Energy Regulatory Commission, the National Transmission Corporation (Transco) is offering the following sub-transmission assets to qualified distribution utilities in Visayas and Mindanao:

(NOTE: Sub-transmission assets up for sale in the Luzon Region shall be advertised at a later date).

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China to enshrine private property

BEIJING—China's parliament changes the constitution on Sunday to protect private property in a landmark move that will water down the core Communist ideology of the world's most populous nation.

Almost 3,000 delegates to the rubber-stamp National People's Congress will also pass a separate constitutional amendment proposed by the Communist Party to protect human rights for the first time when to 10-day annual session ends later in the day.

Premier Wen Jiabao vowed in his March 5 annual address to parliament to rein in the economy after years of breakneck growth, setting a 2004 growth target of 7 percent compared with a GDP rise of 9.1 percent in 2003.

Warning of a widening wealth gap that Beijing fears could spark social unrest, Wen outlined plans to revive farm incomes and boost subsidies in rural areas—home to 800 million people.

He also pledged to create nine million new urban jobs and to employ five million workers laid off from state firms that are struggling to raise efficiencies as the government of Shanghai.

Top bank regulator Liu Mingkang and central bank governor Zhou Xiaochuan pledged to speed reforms of the nation's ailing banking system, saddled with $240 billion in bad loans.

Finance Minister Jin Renqing forecast a $30.6 billion budget deficit in 2004. On same as last year's record shortfall, but will keep the red ink in check by cutting stimulus spending.

As proposed an increase of 11.6 percent to the 2004 defense budget, part of a decade-long campaign to bulk up its military threat over Taiwan.

Wen is scheduled to hold a news conference at 0900 GMT and China watchers will be listening again to his every word on diplomatic tensions for hints of any upgrade for the island's five offensive alongside presidential elections on March 20.

Wen, who will mark his first year in office on March 16, took a conciliatory approach to Taiwan in his opening day speech by offering to resume talks with the island Beijing regards as a breakaway province that must be reunited to the fold.

Two decades after sweeping to power in a crackdown in 1949, reconsidering private property and waging bloody campaigns against landlords, China's parliament is set to amend the constitution to add the sentence: "Private property obtained legally is inviolable."

The constitution, to be amended for the fourth time since its adoption in 1982, will say private property on an almost equal footing with public property—a key plank to maintain economic growth.

"The state respects and guarantees human rights" will be added, but critics said the constitution will pass the power of the party above all else and view it as a tactical move to consolidate communist rule and maintain social stability.

The US Department of State accused China last month of human rights abuses such as unjudicial killings and torture, and said Chinese authorities were "quick to suppress" opposing religious and political groups.

China rejects foreign criticism of its human rights record, saying fundamental human rights mean feeding, clothing and housing 1.2 billion people and that individual rights should take a back seat.

Jiang Zemin, who retired from the presidency in March 2003 and the top job in the Communist Party in November 2002, will join China's pantheon of socialist greats when his "Three Represents" idea is enshrined in the constitution.

The "Three Represents" say the Communist Party stands for advanced productive forces, advanced culture, and the interests of the majority of the Chinese people. The theory paved the way for the party to admit private entrepreneurs to its ranks.

Jiang retained his post as chairman of the state Central Military Commission—China's top military job. Reuters

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 15, 2004
3rd Week of Lent

1st Reading: 2Kr 5:1-5
Gospel: Lk 4:14-30

Jesus added, "No prophet is honored in his own country. Truly, I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens withheld rain for three years and six months, and a great famine came over the whole land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow at Zarephath, in the country of Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet, and no one was healed except Naaman, the Syrian."

On hearing these words, the whole assembly became indignant. They rose up and drove him out of the town; it was on the edge of the hill on which it was built, intending to throw him down the cliff. But he passed through their midst and went his way.

Commentary

Francis Thomas (1581-1626), the great English philosopher of the Renaissance period, wrote about the four kinds of "idols" that hinder understanding. 1. Idols of the tribe (idola tribus): these are errors inherent in human nature itself, the mind has a tendency to perceive in colored ideas that are pleasing to it, and to pass over instances that run counter to them. 2. Idols of the cave (idola specus): errors peculiar to each individual, arising from bodily or mental constitution, reading and other special influences. 3. Idols of the market place (idola fori): errors due to the influence of language. We are apt to think, for example, that there has to be some reality corresponding to every word we use; he gave the example of the word "chance." 4. Idols of the theatre (idola theatri): these are thought systems of the past, which we believe in, nothing better than stage plays representing unreal worlds of people's own creation.

This is a fascinating list, and it shows the great mind indeed before the truth. But people have other ways of the expression "radical truth"; so it may be a good thing to be reminded that what surrounds the truth from us is not something covering the truth, but something (or many things) covering the mind.

It's rather easy to apply this to the current question of issues: they liked him while he said things they liked to hear, but what he said things they didn't like to hear they wanted to put him down or stiff. Or otherwise, it is the more difficult case: couldn't it apply to Jesus?

Christian Publishing Inc., Fullerton St., 19145 Gap, Oklahoma, Quincy City, OK 74 (for) St. Johnson, Oklahoma, Ok. 20 Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,

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Guingona's hypocrisy

EDITORIAL

INSIDE every so-called statesman is a traditional politician struggling to get out. In the case of Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., the struggle was effectively over as early as last January. But he waited until last week to reintroduce the public to his inner politician.

Naturally, like his good friend and fellow ex-Lakas member Sen. Loren Legarda, Guingona buried his decision to defect to the political camp of Fernando Poe Jr. under a mountain of hypocrisy.

"This is about fighting for the return to moral governance and the search for a leader who is his own person, one who is reasons and his native intelligence, one who is prepared to exercise political will in charting meaningful reforms to rebuild our nation under God," Guingona told the long-time.

But the truth is: His wife Robie is running for mayor of Cagayan City under Poe's standard. His son Teofisto III is running for Congress in the second district of Bohol—not, also on the Poe ticket. Both candidacies were motivated by ramblers of the Bautistang ng Naglalakbang Filipino, not only because they had their own crackdances, but because of Guingona's role as the master of deposed President Joseph Estrada, the de facto leader of the opposition.

When Guingona spunks of Poe as exercising political will, therefore, he is using political code or cannot only that. Poe had finally and finally chosen his wife and ran over other opposition candidates. He waited until last week to announce his defection not only because the timing was strategic, he waited because the negotiations were still underway.

We are deeply disappointed with Guingona's decision. Only last November, we praised him for practicing the politics of reconstruction, for renouncing his ambitions to run for the presidency, and for daring to lead the multisectoral citizens' movement Bangon, which is promoting both neutrality and a non-partisan agenda for reform.

But some politicians, apparently, are more neutral than others. When the hoopla broke the news that Guingona was reaching an accommodation with Poe last January, the Vice President's aides tried first to delay the story, because the timing wasn't right, and then declined the responsibility for explaining the angelina-ness of the hapless comedian in the Senate, Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III. We understand that the organizations started as early as December. The reasons then, only two or three weeks after Guingona accepted the leadership of the Bangon movement, he had started bargaining with Poe. This is not the behavior of a statesman, but of a political operative looking out for himself and his family.

Guingona's championing of nationalist causes and justice issues has been admirable. Fuming a lonely voice against the historically pro-American stance of the Macapagal administration, standing in the Senate to expose kickbacks of corruption and abuse of power—these were true profiles in political courage.

But the loneliness of the unpopular politician seems to have turned his head. He may now actually think he is acting like a statesman; for a moment there we thought he was too. But the last reality has hit us with all the force of regret. When Guingona thought he had actually given up the rough-and-tumble of politics, he had only redefined himself outside the loop of power.

The definition is that Poe may not not a surprise. But precisely because Guingona wasn't hypocritical, it forced us to see what was really going on: Realpolitik, all the way down to the grimy level of Gingong City. Guingona seems to get back inside the loop.

Does Guingona actually think we have forgotten the unseemly episode of his wife's connections over ties to real politics, or a time when he was serving as a Cabinet secretary? It may be that his own family prevents him from achieving true neutrality. That is his own business, but at the very least he should stop insulting the public's intelligence.

In last week's briefing, Guingona said he would not accept a Cabinet post if Poe were elected in May. Because the Vice President is already 74, Poe may be actually doing him a favor. But politics being what it is, it won't be the first; it certainly won't be the last.

Why Guingona ditched GMA for FPJ

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

PHILIPPINE, leader of Lakas, the administration party, on Saturday, Vice President Teofisto Guingona's joining the forces of Fernando Poe Jr., but they (Lakas leaders) were really scared stiff and tried to prevent him, for the last minute, to prevent Guingona from leaving. Most of all, he is not only the Vice President of the nation, he is also the president of Lakas, a leading party. Nothing can be more illustrative of the deep disagreements with the administration of GMA and Lakas.

On Thursday, March 11, word had already leaked out that the Vice President will announce on Saturday his acceptance of FPJ's offer to Guingona to be his adviser on governance and public affairs. When he arrived home that night, Undersecretary Robert Aventajado, PFJ's godson, arrived soon after. He said he was sent by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo with the request that he postpone his scheduled press conference in Cagayan two days before, until he and the President have talked.

Guingona told him he had already given his word to Poe and that he could not change it unless the latter released him from that commitment. After Undersecretary left, Guingona went to bed. Later, his associates who had left but was told that the Vice President was already asleep. Still later, there was a call from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself. But Malacañang was again told that Guingona was already asleep.

Early the next day, Friday, the Vice President called the President out of courtesy to her. She was on the road, campaigning. GMA asked him to postpone his announcement until they could have talked (during the Holy Week). Guingona replied that he had already given his commitment to Poe and that he could change that only if Poe would release him from it. He wished her good luck and they applied "Hoopa na tayo ok."

Guingona thought that was the end of it, but later, former President Ramos talked with the same request. The Vice President gave him the same answer.

Still later, Speaker Jose de Venecia called. Obviously, Malacañang was subscribing all the big guns of Lakas in a last-ditch effort to make Guingona change his mind. This time, de Venecia offered Guingona a slot in the administration ticket rather, somebody was going to withdraw to give him a shot. But the latter was not interested in running for any position.

Now De Venecia is crying foul. Guingona has been a member for a long time" and "did his duty." Lakas "will not abide" the President's campaign," but they seem really worried. When Lakas and PDP could not convince Guingona to postpone the announcement of his defection, they asked him to at least stay neutral in the presidential race.

The Vice President replied: "I'll see what I can do."

On Saturday morning, he did what he had committed to do as scheduled: announce his acceptance to be his adviser of FPJ.

Why he didn't decide to dump GMA and join the FPJ bandwagon? In a one-on-one interview over dinner in Quezon City Thursday evening, the Vice President explained why.

After he resigned as GMA's foreign affairs secretary and he organized the "Bangon" movement (not to be confused with Bonifacio Gillego's "Bangon Pilipinas Party"), he and the President had a long talk. He told her his eight-point program of government which he believes would solve some of the country's problems. Foremost among them were:

1. The issuance of Overseas Filipino Investment Bonds to tap the investments of OFWs to be invested in the Philippines. There are 8 to 9 million OFWs right now, if only 2 million of them will each invest $1,00 a month on the OFW bonds, that would be $240 million immediately

Jail them

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ITS a crime, and most of them may get away scotfree.

I'm referring to the use of public funds by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in campaign, (supposedly) money-making junkets billions of pesos. This is brought to the Philippines' front pages by Office, headed by Lina "Evangelista" de Leon, and Hidhidalgo, headed by Francisco Duque. The two were accused at the Comelec by Ramon Bautista of vote-buying, betraying public trust by intervening in election while being public officials, and violating Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials. Bautista calculated the expense at P6 billion.

The Comelec of course is not the best place to lodge that complaint in. It is populated by commissioners who themselves like to waste people's money, of not pocket them, as was shown by their decision to give the no-contest project to a company that subsequently failed to meet their own criteria. The project was scrapped, we're back to manual, but nothing has been said about the money that went to Megaforce being recovered. But a not your mean, Benjamin Abalos. But a coin. He demand to have no accounting of it. And of course the Comelec is inhibited by too well-known relationships, such a reputation for doing favors to friends that members from left to right, including Abalos, have disqualified themselves. Bautista calculated the expense at P6 billion.

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But the case may not rest only with the Comelec. I personally would like to see the case brought to court, for the prosecution of the wrongdoers even after the elections. They are indictable. I don't know about you, as we say in Tagalog, but I get nauseated by the idea that the money being used to say vote for GMA may be hard-earned money—earning a hard wage—is taken from me in withholding taxes by people who probably never did an honest work in their lives to try to buy votes for the same hard-working people in power and who so promptly betrayed the very thing that made her so.

Both Jo Leon and Duque have been evasive in their denial of the charges, even losing sight of the fact that the issue is not whether they personally benefited from the junkets but whether they misused public funds for private projects. The Hidhidalgo GMA cards are not a public project, they are a private one. That project is the campaign of GMA, as the very name of the project advertises. The opposition—or, the defenders of people—of GMA in that project, in image and sound bites, in billboards and in multimedia ads, does not make the project a government project, it makes it a GMA project. There is a difference.

I have heard the Leon on radio and TV interviews, and answers are the same. I never heard the DOJ do that before, but at the heat of this campaign, it has done so unchallenged. I have yet to turn on my radio in the car and not hear it, and I have yet to watch an NBA game on Solar Sports and not see it. That would not be a problem if the Leon were the exception. The rest have, but the issues raising in the mind are lacking none this is GMA's doing, part of her vision to build a "strong republic." Well, blessed pol, that is not your money goal, as GMA's. You may not do with it as you please. That is my money, that is the money of taxpayers, that is the money of 75 million Filipinos.

That project is an indictment to corruption, quite apart from being a criminal offense in itself. Professors advocated the outlawing of the practice of pocketing a cop on his lapel, aside, and the practice of pocketing a cop on the palm of Mayor Jejomar Jejomar Jose. "It's criminal," it suggests that the money that went to those structures is not our money but the mayor's or governor's who built them not as a matter of dictatorial upon their office but out of the goodness of their hearts. It is the "boss" of corruption in the country, the public being made to believe taxes do not belong to them but to the people they elect.

But none of "This is a project of Mayor Jejomar and Governor Jose" compares with this: "This project, subject to approval by GMA, Jo Leon and Duque does not get off the hook on this one. This is vote-buying. This is betraying public trust. this is disinforming illegal election propaganda.

Jail them.

Saddened by VP action

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Bobbit Calimag-Cayanan

PATRICK GE joined the PPA camp recently. Vice President Teodoro Gaviguna got cards from Presidents Mariapaguia Arroyo, former Presidents Ramos and Estrada, Jose de Venecia, all asking him to show his photo. PPA asked him to at least say "Sesame," but by the time their camera was set and ready he was overcome by fiendish one-hour PPA camp. I suppose that PVE and LCW were also tossed by yonder of shared friendship with him and they left and that he was deserving the party he had helped build.

I also feel a lot of sadness for the VP is like an evil, the brother to me, having been a contemporary of my brothers in the Senate, over the years of strug- gle against Marcos, Marcos supporters and "bad hombre" Cesar. It's sad that he rape using distinguished political career by supporting candidates who if not ill-prepared for the job and who cannot hold a candle if he has a troubled athletes, which have in- cluded the VP Dinos if there no fancy-ang institutions in Gadapena, was the reaction of many. I agree ...If he had joined Raul Roco, it would have been his conviction nothing. But PPA?

Gaviguna was quoted as saying that among the reasons he is supporting PPA is that he is "a leader who is his own person." But obviously he must realize that the sense-laugh school of thought is not the way to go (as evidenced by the assume the presidency), for in his ill-prepared- ness and incompetence he would be as the source of his advisers, some of them with questionable credentials, like John Chua-Ong, a for- mer supporter who has fallen out of favor. A con- vential date told this columnist that one of the factors that made him ally with GMA was the resignation of PPA-ans "not accessible to pro- vincial folk" when they went to Malacañang. It's a small clique" which he didn't care to be associ- ated with. I agree with Osmeña—control would be the result of PPA acquisition.

* * *

Osmeña sees a "tight race" between GMA and PPA especially in the Mainland Capital Region, "less than's the battles of Orlando Mayor Lito Lapuz and Asenata and CJC Mayor Sotto and Belmonte." Osmeña said he has more money than it will be a 3 to 1 race in Cebu here in Cebu and the rest of Region 7, Region 6 and even Region 8, he is many interests in the Mayor the opposition has no condition. Osmeña also asserted that GMA will win in Northern Mindanao, his "brother-in-law" is Senator Biazon. But his brother-in-law's sister's brother's PR and Pimentel cannot even get into a big headache in 04.

Osmeña's coaching of Region 8 is rather odd, that of Aunque Ilog, Edmund Perez, chair of the League of Provincial Governors in Visayas Visayas, who screamed that all no governors of his region, that includes, aside from himself, Cupin's Vicente Sotto, Bohol's Issac Tupas, Aklan's Marquez Carlos, Catanduanes' Hector Sanz and Negros Occidental's Joseph Marañon, are sup- porting GMA, in fact, says Perez, all six of them would have preached GMA's resurrection of pop- per during the opening of the Western Visayas regional office in Bacolod. Aunque Osmeña couldn't make it and was embroiled in Bro. Eddie's favorite) instead. Perez credits a lot of the region's support for GMA to former President Fidel Ramos. Explains Tupas: "Because of the Ramos-Cojuangco ties going back for many, many fine ties, but it's significant that Ramos, who is everybody to the industrialist, is backing up GMA.

* * *

I recently wrote that any indication of a de- scheduling bandwagon for GMA may be the fact that Pabasan Rep. Abraham "Bahnar" Mitra abandoned the Lacson camp and coming to GMA. But Mitra insists that he did not jump ship "while Estrada's support, all the big guns of the province are now united in running for hon- nanonly, Gov. Joel Reyes, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn and Rep. Mercedes Alvarez."

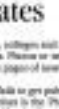
Baboon smiled to explain that Mantrinqua Rep. Socorro Ibarlon Bacaro and his wife LDP and turned liberal because of the "ideological issues" of Sen. Edgardo Angara. He announced that he went as an LDP the party of Sister Aquino and his sister, Mandaluyong Mitra, and at inaugu- ration congressman he was made regional chair- by LDP chief Angara. But when Angara insisted on making PPJ the party's presidential candi- date, Bahnar said he couldn't agree and he de- cided to go on a month-long leave from the par- ty but he was denied himself chairmanship in the name of regional chair and a barangay captain was made provincial chair. That, said Bahnar, was the last straw and he eventually graduated to join the other LDP-turban candidate, Senator Lacson.

But GMA's spokesperson, Mike Defensor, be- gan talking to him about joining the LC which had vowed to join the K-4 coalition, and he also dished Bahnar's motives. Quoth Mitra to Mitra, in an effort to entice her help in convincing her son. Joining the LP wasn't difficult to do, he says, as it was an LP that his sister abandon first when she joined the Nacionalista Party and the LP rally in 1971. Bahnar said Bacaro signed up with the LP and when Erib visited Palawan, he threw his support behind her.

* * *

"Running great" Fr. Robert E Reyes, OP chap- lain for seven years and twin parish priest of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal/Sarah in Project 4, QC, at launching his book, "Running Peace," that Thursday, March 18, at the Malacañang Cafeteria, Mendiola, 11 a.m. Tuesday, QC. Fr. Reyes be- gins with a run from QC Circle to Cubao at 6:30 a.m., then Mass at 9 a.m. and the launch at 10 a.m. Father Reyes' book, published by Claretian Publications, contains his reflections on his run- ning experiences, his prayer and writings about various issues, and was edited by Del Ca- talina Gonzalez with a foreword by fashion designer Inday Badiri. Special guests and emcee duties will be handled by broadcasters Gabriel Ramos Jose, Jr. Tuesday please wear sport book design by Lorelei Ziehl. During the book launch inter- views will be delivered by Ignosel, Fr. Archie Ba- rengan, S.J. and Father Reyes, with the three Claretians providing inspirational songs. His friends are all invited.

Special treatment for PMA graduates



READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

TODAY is the valedictorian year when schools, colleges and universities hold their graduation ceremonies. Photos or stories about these events will soon grace the pages of newspapers and magazines.

One educational institution that never fails to get publicity is about its annual commencement exercises is the Philippine Military Academy the training ground for the future officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for graduation ceremonies. Here are some reasons we want to say.

Yesterday, the 104-year-old military school sent off 159 new second lieutenants and midgets of the AFP for its previous years, the Presidents of the Philippines and other high ranking government officials present to oversee.

The Inquirer's report last March 9 on the top graduates of PMA Makabayan Class 2004 drew a flurry from reader Tomasito Canyon of Mission, Sulaiman. She wrote: "Today, you have two stories about the graduates of PMA Class 2004. On the front page you wrote about the female valedictorian who entered her lecture who was the 'super gone' of PMA Class 1974. Then, on Page 17, you featured the proud photo of the top PMA graduates of 2004.

"Every year, you publicize the graduation of the future military leaders of the country. You write about their backgrounds and achievements as if to make them look glamorous in the public's eyes.

"What I find odd in the report was about the PMA graduates that you give them special treatment compared to the graduates of the Philippine Normal/Science Academy? You hardly write about the PNPA graduates. I think the honor police officers are as important as the future AFP officials.

"You should be fair to the PMA graduates you are encouraging them to think they are the cream of our country. No wonder they engage in destabilization and coup d'état because people like you make them think that way."

Somewhere

The reader's letter is stamped out. I do see overall reading in the Inquirer regarding about the graduation stories of the latest batch of police officers. When and where did the academy hold its commencement exercises?

I got the answers to my question from another broadsheet that devoted the event. It was held last March 11 at Camp Mateo Carino in Silang, Cavite. The guest of honor and principal keynote as guest of honor and commencement speaker Ernest Hadley Barona headed the 26th PNPA graduating class. The same newspaper even had a full page advertisement about the photos of the top graduates.

Before the President can proceed, I thought that was enough time enough for the event to be written about and photos of her handing out awards and diplomas published. After all, the public interests of the chief executive are considered newsworthy.

Unfortunately, the business had another news say photo about the PNPA graduation for the second time in the last month of police officers. Indeed, in terms of publicity, this year's PNPA graduates are poor stepsisters to their counterparts in Fort Del Pilar in Baguio City.

The PNPA graduates want in gross with envy at the special treatment the PMA graduates get whenever they complete their academic and military requirements to the AFP.

Commercialism

The editor who "put on hold" the front page of the Inquirer on March 8 issue explained that the story violated to by the reader ("Top women cadet adores 'super gone'") was given permission to appear in observance of last Monday's International Women's Day.

The cadet is the only female among the top 10 graduates of her class. This was the first time since 1999 that only one female cadet made it to that elite standing. The editor also said the photo of the class valedictorian that appeared on Page 22 was to illustrate the news report and give a face to her fellow members.

He denied the reader's claim that PMA graduates are being discriminated against in the coverage of their commencement exercises. The article publicity that the PMA gets may be due to the fact that the PMA is older than the PNPA and is compared to the PNPA's 21 years, and the pomp and pageantry that usually accompany PMA graduation rites have attracted wider public interest.

On the question of why there was no news about the March 2 PNPA graduation ceremonies, the editor recalled that the rites were given only passing mention in the Inquirer assigned to that beat. Neither did the desk get any advance notice from the PNPA or PNP media bureau about it as the proper arrangements could have been made for its coverage.

Evaluation

I agree with the reader's comment that the future police officials are as important as the future AFP officers. Although the PNP and AFP have different areas of authority, both are, in the final analysis, engaged in the task of maintaining peace and order in our country. They complement each other's efforts.

It cannot be denied though that the PMA enjoys an edge over the PNPA in terms of media exposure of its graduation events and other public-oriented activities. For some unexplained reasons, military service seems to attract more interest than police service. The attractive color uniform, precision marching and high-decibel cannon salutes of the PMA have left a good impression on the public's mind.

It also hope that the PMA has a media liaison who knows how to disseminate information about its activities. She or he interviews the publicity that the PNPA gets when some of its personnel get involved in unauthorized politics-military operations.

I think the "imbalance" in coverage is not deliberate. The perceived importance of one branch of government service over another has nothing to do with it. It's just that the PMA is more popular and prestigious than the PNPA as the former produces more generals than the latter does in the long run.

This is not to say that the PNPA's activities should be ignored by the newspaper. Some adjustments in the reporting system can perhaps be made to give the PNPA its rightful share in the pages of the business that is at least as par with the PMA. Needless to emphasize, the newsworthy events and personalities.

* * *

The readers' addresses may be reached in the following ad- dress: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Tapar and Ellipsoidal Streets, Makati City or through fax nos. 897-4753 to 54, or reader- sadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Minguita's letter

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

I HARDLY overstate, in this age of cyberspace, that a letter from the doctor Minguita Padilla recently making the rounds of the Internet, reaches us in Mindanao. What's surprising is how it has reached so probably about a dozen times, each time from a different source. Not only that, the letter has probably been read by more than a million people by now by Minguita's count, for which she so kindly gave her imprimatur.

In the way am I reproduce here Minguita's "Dear Friends" letter in toto, for obvious space constraints. I have to trim it down somewhat, but we can gather already from some its point. Here it goes:

"I have received emails from countless people who I have not heard from for years or PEN pleading more, but my conscience has been pricking, so, I cried inappropriate to do so. No excuse or malice is in my heart. But given the very sensitive topic at hand, I must apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may bring.

"Many of the people behind this PPJ enrollment are individuals whom I consider friends and who have helped me immensely in my work and my life, especially in the past. Many of them were among those in Ed Angara who not only endorsed me but that would make possible my dream of having an eye banking system in the country, but who per- sonally worked for its passage into law (still pend- ing with the Senate). Many of them helped me in all my life that the Senator committee approved the bill, making it one of the houses bills ever passed. I do what also the only senator who was deceased when the bill was finally approved. I will always be grateful. Sapilino Pimentel, whose friendship with my late father blossomed when Daddy was the head of the Senate electoral re- tional that proved he was a victim of Juan Ponce Enrile's (JPE) long memory, to someone whom I have now been the high regard.

"Loyalty is a high school hutchpotch. This comes for something. But certain things transcend

Continued on inquirer.net

friendship and camaraderie that neither can make me blind to what I believe is the immense disservice these people have committed to the Filipino people by choosing to suffer Senator Erap. It is not as a presidentiable that I have any- body at this point in our history when we are fighting a desperate battle for political morality and intellectual respect. The Visayship only makes this position more painful.

"I have had experience with Erap's style of running the public affair per se. Just for the record, I happen to think Mona Lisa is one of the best singers in Ll- pa City but ever had. But the presidency is not the municipality. PPJ's near villain Senator Erap is no one for dreamers hour that last for days, not just hours, making him an even more legendary alcoholic than Erap. His man has left hold over the lowliest government position, nor can he give out meaningful contracts that will solve the problems plaguing the country and world scales, reducing every issue to one-liners and empty slo- gans. He also happens to pay out of the millions Senator receiving as PPJ's campaign funds, not even bothering his line to income, showing all it lacking of honesty to the mind. The list goes on...

"And this is the man the above mentioned per- sons, as well as the political dinosaurs behind him, are trying to shove down our throats. I have no- hear president for our times because he responsi- with the 'must' and he is 'sincere.' The 'must' are ignorant. They are not stupid. There is a world of difference between the two. A lukewarm time in power in try to enlighten and educate the Igle- rant and misinformed, not take advantage of their ignorance just so that they can propagate themselves in power.

"There is this notion out there are already indications of how chaotic an PPJ presidency will be. At the end of the day, no matter how good one's intentions are, it is the president who makes the decisions. Whose advice will PPJ follow if he does not have any- one minding us on the presidency? Who will make the issues in hand? What guiding policy will be follow? Even when he is in power he will not have the ma- jority Senate. If Ed Angara or Ernie Pimentel for that mat- ter had chosen to run for president in spite of their personal lack of charisma instead of throw- ing to prop up a puppet, they would have a strong ally in PPJ's close to campaign down natural, than they would have done this more to a great favor.

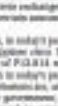
"This is one we would have seen a strong mes- sage to our people that leaders should be elected based on competence in find, not on personal popularity at time distance. As a famous woman- ner so aptly put it, the present campaign is now being fought on the 'boulevard stage.' And I really believe that we deserve better.

Thank you, Minguita. Under an PPJ presidency, we are known who to hold accountable. Per- haps this burlesque politics is just the right anti- dote to remind us to stop from the sad state of affairs we're in now after all. Ang bayan ang li- da, ala ang kinatitiklo.

* * *

Continued on inquirer.net

Paying for honesty



THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THIS Wednesday, it will be 67 years since Presi- dent Ramon Magsaysay died in a plane crash. Since his death, time and again, candidates have been compared to Magsaysay. But what Magsaysay is remembered for, among the dwindling number of Filipinos who still remember him, is his fantastic honesty. I have cited articles concerning his insistence on separating expenses incurred during his presidency which were of an official nature, and expenses incurred by him, his family while living in Malacañang. Newspaper and magazine accounts at the time detailed how the president instructed that meals for his children's friends were to be paid for from his salary, and that guardian for his sons' car was to be funded by the administration only if it was used for official duty.

In the present day, when the President of the Philippines earns P500,000 a year, or P20,000 a month, this seems inconceivable. The reader may wonder if this was ever conceivable in Magsaysay's time. Or any previous presidential time.

I will leave it to Dalisa Montreal to embark on a more scientific study of what I am about to contend, but I think the figures I've cited here are enough for a rule of thumb as any to arrive at what presidents actually used to earn.

Under the 1935 Constitution, the salary of the president was P20,000 an annum. To figure out what, say, this amount was in 1957, would be worth in terms of today's pesos, I asked the help of Jess- ica Morales Garcia, who is an economist and finan- cial analyst. She explained that to make a calculation, say, the equivalent of a peso in the year 1957 if you exchanged it commercially anyone today, we in- vested in first, figuring out what peso were worth at time, in dollars, figuring out what those dollars would be worth in today's dollars, and then con- verting those dollars to today's pesos. Of course this doesn't take things such as the cost of living, both then and now, into account, but it's a start.

From the time of the Commonwealth until the administration of Ferdinand Marcos, the peso-dol- lar relationship was very fixed at 2 to 1. So

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whether in 1937 or 1957, the president's salary of P20,000 was equivalent to $10,000. To find out what $10,000 earned per year in 1957 would be equivalent to, in terms of what the dollar respec- chase today, economists apparently refer to a value of "purchasing power parity" measure formula prepared by the US government. For example, you take $10,000 circa 1957, multiply it by 12.814 (the factor according to the table), and the amount you get is what those 1957 dollars would be worth in the year 2004, more or less. Ap- ply that amount by the current exchange rate and you get as an idea of what a certain amount in 1957 could buy you in 2004.

To cut a long story short, in today's peso terms, the presidency of the Philippines in 1957 was earning an annual salary of P128.14 million, not counting perks—councils in today's peso terms. Based on the 1957 appropriations act, among the lowest paid people in the government, janitors, were earning P10,000 a month in terms of 2004 peso value, or P120,000 a year.

Based on the different rates in that table, the fol- lowing deductions are possible: in 1946, Manuel Roxas was earning as president, the equivalent of P8.43 million a year. In 1957, Ramon Mag- saysay was earning the equivalent of P64.14 million a year. It was only a bit more than a million pesos a month that Magsaysay could honestly instruct Malacañang to declare the expenses of his children he food and entertainment, gas and oth- ers, from his salary, and send them to good old Ram- on Magsaysay High School in Quezon City.

Fast forward to the present. Ferdinand Marcos, and succeeding presidents, found other ways to augment their salaries. Marcos, for example, was said to have received a monthly "allowance" from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor). Joseph Estrada was said to have received monthly payments from jueteng lords. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is said to receive monthly payments from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).

Presidents Quirino, and successors, Presidents Gar- cia, would afford to write to grandmother but he from Radio Station, located on lucky lungs but not enormous fees, after they left office).

President Magsaysay was afforded as in income and do what he did—in cases above spending for personal, anti-official, purposes—without being reprehensible. His predecessors and successors, who were less contagious about separating Palace funds from their own, were not. Which is why Mag- saysay is buried in Mt. Manunggal, while Quirino is buried in the ashes of savings together with ours in a mausoleum of style and opulence.

Magsaysay was many things but he was not- cher as American scope nor a classic freak with political ambitions farther him.

After all, it was no one less than the vocal mak- ing nationalization act was passed, while the Ameri- cans positively disliked, he was the president un- der whom the Laurel-Langley Agreement was ne- gotiated, which advanced the cause for the end of free trade between the Philippines and the United States. Magsaysay was the president who initiated that the Philippine flag had to fly over the US bases and demanded to send the Philippine Army to break down barriers that he felt were standing in Filipinos travelling to and from those bases. He was the one who told Ameri- America, he accommodations of those who were critical of American policies. The points in ques- or sweeping assumption which isn't true that there was no difference between the Liberals and Nacionalistas, or that the two parties were con- structed free under the Kaisahang-yaman, in- deed, as an endorsed nationalist, more in- consistent in their policies.

There is a question remain why Magsaysay was so adamant, even loved, in his time, and it had little to do with infrastructure projects or American advo- cating or the gullible nature of the electorate. It had to do with what he was, and the people seeing what accomplishing genuine, and not manufactured.

* * *

Continued on inquirer.net

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President GMA and a Federal Republic of the Philippines

LETTERS

THE CITIZENS' Movement for a Federal Philippines (CMFP) lauds this President for publicly announcing (after photo-ops) her intention to lead the country in the establishment of a federal system of government.

The CMFP reaches for this segment of this agenda, as the movement had grown, nationwide basically by calling attention to the pressing need to end the concentration of power in a single national entity. We need a dispersal of power, because we need to rationally answer a greater number of high-caliber talents to lead and manage regional development. A federal system will grant the nation that chance because only a federal system can give real power, duly vested, to regional governments.

This is the time to survey — we need to unleash the creative powers of regional economies, to effectively use local resources of local aspirations, so it makes as much governance as possible answers to the people. Federal enforcement mechanisms, our republic servants, and focused on smaller territories, we expect the governments and regional political parties to be productive in their respective spheres.

The reason we, as the CMFP, expect this to happen, is that under-made proposals by smaller territories will enable programs of government more responsive to their constituencies, particularly the infrastructure and socio-economic roles in programs conscious making regional economies more supportive and sustainable.

This means less differences. The GMA proposal that 80 percent of Filipinos favor a shift to a regional government, a mere balance of the federal system as a survey ran showed in May-June 2003.

In running our son's civic agenda, the President has cut out for herself a leadership role that will have the more chance of ending our never-ending brain-storm, our fatalistic contract to a nation. All cost the nation's people we have touched such this message are energized with a renewed hope, albeit we, as citizens' movement, have only an idea. But the President has the power to make it happen.

This is the last change for all of us — advocates for the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines. Indeed for Filipinos's time has come. Let us not waste this opportunity. Let us make it soon.

—ESTELA ROSE DIANG,
spokesperson,
The Citizens' Movement for a Federal Philippines, 3 Unalyssum Cottage, 104 Sandiego Ave., Riverbanks Country, Barangka, Marikina City

No causal relationship

I AM writing in connection to the pre-populous control ball-page paid advertisement that the Inquirer published last Feb. 29.

After reading all statistics on how many Filipino families are poor, how many women in poor families are contraceptives and poverty incidence in urban to rural rate, the advertisement also cited, "There are the women who children who can't handle, families that need to be poor, are so much more in a child-ravaged than smaller well-to-do families."

The advertisement merely said that large families tend to be poor. But this advertisement failed to establish a causal link between large family size and poverty. Another pro-population control paid advertisement that appeared in your newspaper a few weeks ago said, "It is found that large families are poor and poverty." But this advertisement failed to show that the large family size causes the difficulty. Furthermore, while this advertisement said that poverty is a problem found for poor large families, it did not say that it is impossible.

It is true also, by itself, does not make or keep a family poor. It poor, but rather it was family of 12 has more chances of getting out of poverty than an equally poor but, but family of six or less members. In fact, have studied to see population growth is an economic and spur to development rather than an obstacle. All countries that have developed on a non-population control have developed. Some countries would prefer to establish a business—and thereby create more jobs, goods and services—as a highly populated area than in a thinly populated one.

The dubious claims that population control solves poverty does not justify discarding scholarly of the government's limited funds to implementing a comprehensive population control policy—especially if done with programs of equally dubious morality.

—CRISTINA L. BONFIL,
30 Sterlingham St., Multinational Village, Muntinlupa City

Offensive and insulting ad to women

DURATION for us by my latest article?

This is the stock picture of the current advertisement for Rapid-Iron 15-second laundry that we have been hearing over ABS radio and seeing on billboards on Edsa and Manila's busiest roads these past weeks.

The double-meaning of the crotch photo is carried in the inclusion a number of Filipino men. In actuality — for the remainder of the — and in those ads to sell the product to male consumers. And as usual, women — if seen and young women — in the ads sketch and is relegated to the kitchen.

We find it frustrating and sad that these advertisements, which are offensive and insulting to women and girls, are not there in the open.

We strongly urge those concerned in the advertising industry to take the necessary action to ensure that these advertisements are stopped. The protection of women and girls in achieve statements as one objects to a common form of violence against women and girls. Ours is supposedly be an enlightened and humane society where everybody, especially women and girls, are treated with dignity and respect. Help us make this so. Pull out the Napoleon Brandy advertisement now.

—EDERLINA L. TEXEIRA,
**executive director,
National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, 1144 Apacible St., San Miguel, Manila**

Lacson's platform not for Mindanao

THE BUDGET statements by presidential candidate Panfilo Lacson that he would send out "scouts to search for the missing president" during emergency, corruption and lawless violence particularly in Mindanao," gives the Bangsamoro people more reason to look him in the morning elections.

Lacson's platform is a platform that would actually spell a heightened state paramilitarism, violence in the country especially in Mindanao. His own presidency can, I am sure, be a basis upon seeing a reliance on fascist, totalitarian-like and non-people means that would surely lead to the concerned abuse and exploitation of the Moro people's human rights in their homelands. He statement is enough for the Bangsamoro people to not vote this coming elections and make sure that he or anyone of his kind would not be elected. The Moro people need and wanted in Mindanao is somebody who is coming to be a Hitler and could be worse than Marcos. We suggest that Lacson leave Mindanao out of his campaign platform. Because we have had more than enough of the bloodshed.

Are not the Moro lives lost in the Shell Estate, Shell Republic and Jolo[illegible] massacre enough? Are not the thousands of Moros similar previous regimes' total war policy — from Marcos to Macapagal-Arroyo's "all-out war" policy — not to the "nagging wounds" to be capable of a better government or genuinely address the basic needs of the people history angry, shallow and irresponsible Mindanao policy. Lacson's solution to the problem of corruption and lawless violence perpetrated by the state itself is for public awareness that Lacson is one politician among the peoples' many, can only improve the interests of the elite and to stop the selling out of the country's resources and patrimony to foreign interests.

Moros, Muslims and Christians are fed up with bullets, bombs and tanks. Have we not all learned from the lessons of the ill-fated Pilot war in President Macapagal's "doing Republic"? Have we not had slaves of the Jabidah massacre? Is it worth considering hundreds of thousands of innocent people? Will Lacson as the presidential son, Mindanao will be flooded with the blood of the innocent, most probably years after the Macapagal's record.

—ANDRES ALVAREZ,
**co-chairs,
Union Bangsamoro Party Int., 1226-D Bldg. 3, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City**

Are there schools not recognized by CHED?

I WAS appalled in reading a selection announcements that one of the qualifications for a student wishing to apply for loans or financial aid Makabayang through the PhilAmerican Charity Scholarship Office, is that he or she should be a bona fide student of a Commission on Higher Education recognized school. Well and good.

But are there colleges and universities in the country not recognized by the CHED? If so, why did the CHED not say who does? How will the student know that the college or university he or she is enrolled in is not recognized by the CHED?

In order to close answers in helping poor students acquire quality education with or without government loans granted them, the CHED should first close the following kinds of schools:

(a) Phony colleges or educational institutions that have operated like mushrooms.

(b) Schools, colleges and universities that lack the required physical facilities, instructors and laboratory equipments.

(c) Colleges and universities that do not have highly qualified faculties well-rounded and disciplined students.

(d) Other schools with grave inadequacies that need to defend immediate rectifiers.

There are many of these kinds of schools, colleges and universities in provinces and in other cities aside Metro Manila. And Philippinians should be alarmed by these inadequacies.

—EUSEBIO B. O. PETILLA, JR.,
**Principal Secretary,
Congressional Representative, Lanao del Norte**

Across the NATION
Associate Editor Tony Burgonio

Bayan Muna solon slams GMA aide

LUCENA CITY—Party-list Rep. Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo has denounced President Macapagal-Arroyo's top security adviser, Norberto Gonzalez, who accused elected leftist officials of using their funds worth millions of pesos to support communist insurgents.

"There's a very bad danger here. That irresponsible statement could go down the line—to the lower level of the military. We've seen his game for those liberal-minded officers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines," Ocampo said in a phone interview on Saturday.

"We still hold Gonzalez accountable if more defenseless Bayan Muna members are murdered by military operatives," said Ocampo.

"Blood will be in the hands of members of Cha'chapuza," he said in a separate statement.

On Friday, Gonzalez accused Ocampo and Satur Ocampo Bayan party-list legislators, Crispin Beltran and Liza Maza, of funneling a total of ₱50 million in state funds yearly to the NPA since 2001.

"That statement would justify the killing spree being committed by the military against Bayan Muna members and other militant activists," Ocampo said.

Bayan Muna says it can show that military and paramilitary groups have allegedly killed 37 of its members nationwide.

"He was rewarded by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration as top security adviser to engage in black propaganda against our group," Ocampo said of Gonzalez.

He dared the President and Gonzalez charge them with "treason" if they are really the persons in elected government officials who have been supporting enemies of the state.

"Can't Gonzalez come up with anything better than such an outrageous lie to stop Bayan Muna from exposing the party-list election for the second consecutive time?" asked Ocampo in the statement. He challenged the security adviser to produce evidence to substantiate his claim, or "else resign from the Cabinet."

Beltran also assailed Gonzalez' statement as "short of ridiculous."

Delfin Mallari Jr., PhilStar/Inquirer Lucena Bureau

Kabayan warns troops in Mindoro to behave or face replacement

DE CASTRO

LUCENA CITY—Leading vice presidential candidate Noli de Castro warned all government forces assigned in Mindoro island that he would work for their replacement if another or politically related killing was reported in their area.

"If another joint-raid killing happens again in Mindoro, if another candidate is again killed, I told the military officials that I would personally appeal to President Macapagal Arroyo to transfer all the troops out of the island," said De Castro, who hails from Pola, Oriental Mindoro.

Military authorities have denied involvement in the killings.

De Castro said he met with Southern Luzon police and military officials on Thursday night.

"The military officials gave assurance that they have everything under control and they have already identified the perpetrators of violence on the island," De Castro said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo had expressed apprehension with the situation's deterioration but urged him not to wait for another bloody incident before calling for the pullout of the military.

"But records of the military's killing spree on the island can speak for itself. That's enough basis for him to move now and call for the transfer of the soldiers under the 203rd Infantry Battalion," Ocampo said.

He clarified that although he supports the calls for the total pullout of governmental troops from Mindoro, the "replacement of the whole 2000 ill is a move in the right direction for the meantime."

Jose Ozaeta, spokesperson of the human rights group Karapatan in Southern Tagalog, urged De Castro not to be contented with his call for the replacement of the soldiers.

"The military is killing Sobrevinas's (De Castro's) own people. They are crying for justice. He should act now before it's too late. Why wait for another killing to happen if he can prevent it from taking place? The military should be totally pulled out," Ozaeta said over the phone.

He said the families of slain mayoral candidate and lawyer Jose Magsino said her companion Lolita Bonto were disappointed when Malacañang announced last month that the killings had been solved.

"Why will they declare that when there is no single suspect arrested?" she said.

Magsino, the vice mayor of Naujan town and Bonto, a district councilmember of the party-list group Bayan Muna, were gunned down by unidentified assailants on Feb. 13.

According to Bayan Muna, Magsino and Ferra were the 19th and 20th fatalities in Mindoro.

Jeffer Mallari Jr., Phil Southern Luzon Bureau

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Banahaw sacred spots off-limits for 5 yrs

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—Thousands of religious devotees and "the ill seekers" who traditionally climb Mt. Banahaw during the Lenten season will be shocked to find that their regular routes to different sacred spots atop the mystical mountain are fenced with barbed wire.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has given her approval of the measure during her campaign sortie in Quezon on Friday.

The Protected Area Management Board, a multisectoral group tasked by the government with safeguarding the area, planned a media tour during a meeting here Tuesday, that would enforce a five-year closure of the Montes Banahaw and San Cristobal Protected Landscape starting this Holy Week.

Fredrich Borja, provincial tourism officer and tourism executive officer, cautioned that the decision to close the mountain was the result of studies by all PAMB members.

"If we will not enforce the closure order, what would happen next would be catastrophic not only to the environment but also to human lives," he said.

He added: "But we will only close until barbed wire the usual routes and pathways."

Asked by reporters for her comments about the Mt. Banahaw closure order, the President turned to her running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, whom she called an environmentalist, and urged him to give his "good opinion" on the matter.

De Castro recalled that during his broadcasting days, the uncontrolled operation of Banahaw during the Lenten season had long been the target of complaints.

He said the temporary closure of the mystical mountain was the correct move to save it from further destruction. "Kung tuluyang matatrik, baka kasi di na mapalitgan, baka nabawog ang tunga." (If that happens, the treasures will end.)

The President did not object to De Castro's proposal.

During the Holy Week, thousands of pilgrims are expected to trek Banahaw, passing by the towns of Dolores, Sariaya, Lucban and Tayabas in Quezon, and Liliw, Majayjay and San Pablo City in Laguna.

Last year, piles of trash and other traces of destructive practices were left by mountaineers and devotees. Volunteers collected and brought down from the mountain a total of 13 truckloads of garbage—plastic bags, liquefor boxes and empty water bottles and canned food.

The PAMB officials said they would meet with religious leaders on March 17.

Wenny Cobang, Dolores municipal and barangay operations officer, said that if no legal question would arise from the closure order, the PAMB was ready to close the environment to control.

Three children in Dolores died from flash floods last year. Last Holy Week, Banahaw was hit by four forest fires believed caused by burning candles left unattended by pilgrims.

Several areas atop the mountain also showed signs of having been exploited by timber poachers.

The PAMB also requested the provincial police office and the military's fourth Army Command to assist in the implementation of the resolution.

Angeles, Tanggol Kalikasan commander coordinator, was local environment to follow the PAMB order and not cut new trails to avoid accidents. "They can't just make new routes, irresponsible."

Cobang said new excursion devotees would still have other "routes" in Barangay Sta. Lucia to pray and meditate.

Angeles Gonzales, village chief of Barangay Kinabuhayan, disclosed that the village was swamped with homosexuals of all kinds during Lent.

"They hold huge rites surrounded by trees. From there bodies and appearance, they are not religious devotees but pleasure seekers," he told the reporter.

CADET Julie Jarina, the ninth and only woman among the 150 top graduates of the Philippine Military Academy, is carried by her underclassmen for the traditional dunking on Saturday at the PMA's combat area.

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Help prevent forest fires, DENR urges upland folk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has asked residents in Central Luzon's upland villages to help prevent and stop forest fires that last year destroyed 2,362 hectares of forest lands and P10 million worth of trees and wood products in the region.

Regional Executive Director Gil Lema, DENR regional executive director, said the alert against kayal forest fires has worldwide environmental implications.

Citing a report from the United Nations Environmental Program, Dr. Lema said the Philippines ranked 47th as the biggest contributor to global warming.

Carbon dioxide emissions in the country reached an annual average of 46,900 million metric tons during the last decade.

He said global temperature rise also has effects on coastal communities, mainly the slow sinking of villages.

Last year's forest fires occurred mainly in Bataan and Nueva Ecija, a DENR report showed. These happened from February to May when the region gets little rainfall.

Dr. Lema said fires annually destroy an average of 2,400 hectares of natural and reforested forest plantation in Central Luzon.

Fires, he said, had accounted for 60 percent of the cause of deforestation in Central Luzon in the last 10 years.

Out of 771,174 hectares of forest land in the region, only 194,500 hectares or about 25 percent have adequate forest cover, he said. The inventory does not include forests in Aurora.

If nothing is done to arrest the incidents of fire and with a deforestation rate of 4,000 hectares annually, Dr. Lema said the region's forest would be gone by 2050.

In Baguio City, records from the Cordillera DENR's forestry section said at least four cases of forest fires last year were traced to children who were left playing with fire.

Antonio Bellay, a DENR forester, said the Cordillera region had 131.28 hectares of forest cover to fires last year.

He said among the causes of forest fires are the farmers' kaingin and forest hunting system.

Last year, the Annie V. Duppin Foundation Inc., Barangay Apugan in Baguio City, Texas Instruments Philippines Inc., Mirant Philippines Foundation Inc. and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority started planting 1,000 seedlings in Apugan to prevent Baguio's watersheds from erosion and to protect the city's environment.

The project aimed to prevent forest fires in the city.

Albert Tawagan, Apugan Barangay Chief, said they undertook the project as it could serve as an example for other Baguio officials.

Bellay said the DENR has acquired pine seedlings that will be distributed to affected areas to replace the lost trees. Rosario Dyan, *PIA Central Luzon Desk, and Beatriz Cubeta, PIA Northern Luzon Bureau*

Mining project inside protected area, says exec

By Ferdinand Zuzuola
PDI Mindanao Bureau

SURIGAO, Surigao Del Norte—The provincial environment chief here on Friday admitted that the mineral exploration project being undertaken by at least nine companies in the province has within its precincts two protected areas.

The National Integrated Protected Areas Systems or the Nipas law of 1992 defines protected areas as "identified portions of land and water set aside by reason of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against destructive human exploitation."

Benjamin Bacilio said the P5-billion mineral exploration project along the coastal village of Pajada Bay here falls within the coverage of the Nipas law.

Protected area

"Yes, it is true that the mineral exploration project along the coastal villages of Pajada Bay falls within the protected area," he said.

Bacilio, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau said the area being explored for mineral resources such as nickel and chromite was not within the 21,000-hectare Pajada protected area.

"While it is true that mining activities are prohibited in protected areas, the mining companies undertaking mineral exploration in Pajada have been there long before the area was declared a protected area in 1994," said Bacilio.

Because of this, Bacilio said there was no way the explorations could be stopped.

Opposition

Fr. Medardo Ailonen, leader of the anti-mining group Save Surih Movement for Peace Empowerment and Development, said their call for the expulsion of the mining companies would continue despite the DENR's position.

Salcenia said the mining activities endanger the lives and health of the residents living in the area.

Ateneo surges in UAAP wars

ADAMSON is making significant strides in its bid to finally bag the general championship in the University Athletic Association of the Philippines.

Three strides came in the form of a first women's team title in badminton, a first golf medal in athletics, a breakthrough in swimming and a superb conquest of the varsity football crown.

"We are gratified that the emphasis the school is giving to sports other than basketball is producing results," said Jose Antonio Jr., the lone varsity director who is also president of the UAAP Season 66 "Blue and maroon athletes are living up to its spirit."

Apart from bagging the women's badminton team title, Lady Eagle Irene Chu copped the most valuable player honors in the sport. The only other time an Adamson women's team won a championship was in 1979-1977 in volleyball when the school was still a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Abele de la Cruz's diminutive gold medal and Erwin Tumbocon's 400-m individual medley title in swimming marked an outstanding year for the two, which yielded the men's basketball title to the Eastern University.

Ateneo's football title was the first in nine years, and Capistrano said it was memorable because the schools have feuded hard on gridiron encounters.

It's the general championship tilt, play symbolic of the overall championship, which Ateneo dwindles most. "Although we are still in behind in the general championship rankings, our long-term objective is to win overall," said Ateneo director who is also president of the Philippines, E. Bonifacio and Pat Gaerlan II, as well as Visayas qualifier Bohol Doctors College, USJR, Foundation University and University of Negros Occidental. Residents complete the men's semifinal cast.

The Wanstad Quo coaches host University of Mindanao, 21-15, and Mapua vs Mindanao State University, 21-13, in the eliminations.

Fatigue overcame Wanstad in the match against MSU as she suffered a mild sprain after landing hard on her left ankle following a jump serve. After a timeout, Wanstad regained her composure and went on to dictate the early Warriors' attack.

Manotoc, Agojo join Sta. Elena Cup

THE INAUGURAL edition of the Sta. Elena Cup, the maiden post international tournament of the multi-awarded Sta. Elena Golf Club, has drawn a starry mix of low and high handicappers who have lifted up all the 220 team slots made available by organizers.

Slated March 25-28, the Sta. Elena Cup is the centerpiece event of an exciting summer schedule of the club recently acknowledged as the best course in the Philippines and the second best in the region by the prestigious Asia Golf Magazine.

Tommy Manotoc, already part of the winning Mango Tree foursome, scored a double in the prestigious two-ball format. In this case we'll Bonna Flores as his teammate partners.

Others set to join them in fight for the four prizes scored are the tandems of reigning club champion Ching Ramos, Jojo Sarmiento, Jojo Chavez-Ela, Richie Garcia and defending member champion Manolong Chua.

Therese Tolosa, who partnered with Stephanie Yu in borrowing the third-all female tandem to win the Cup last year, is entered here but is now playing for Ateneo. Ria Co, meanwhile, is bringing in multi-titled juniors Jericho Agojo as her partner.

The four exclusive sponsors this year—Board/Carrbasa International, Southwest International Airlines, Toyota Motors Philippines and Mitsubishi Motors Corp.—have laid out a special package of tournament and relief prizes for all participants.

UM-Tagum spikers reach Boracay finals

By Trina Bacio

CEBU CITY—University of Mindanao-Tagum's men's and women's teams posted their third straight wins yesterday in the Mindanao eliminations and earned semifinal seats in the Norma Beach Volley 2004 at the Ayala Center here.

Powered by Jason Monreal and Bradley Que, the Lady Monroe edged Myrtle-ne Jumao and Rosita Ian Bonilla of Mindanao State University, 25-17, to join unbeaten Ateneo de Davao University Lady Canes of Jimmy College, and Mindanao State University at the top of the leaderboard in the women's division after the elimination round.

The four women's teams from Mindanao will battle for bracket and bragging supremacy in the Boracay II sub-regionals by Saturday. Cebu Wildcats, Bohol, Cooperative Bakery's, Smart, Dumaguete Red, Ayala Center Cebu and Tiel Friday's.

Joining them in the event, slated April 16-18, are former powerhouse College of St. Benilde, Jaime University of Baguio and Adamson, as well as Visayas qualifiers South-western University, the defending champion, University of the Visayas, University of San Agustin, and University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos.

As hosts play the UM-Tagum duo of Ranjelito Tandoan and Lou-el Bilaan overpowered Cesar Cuevas and Angel Tuanon of Ateneo de Davao, 21-12, to send down the second semifinals slot in their division and join classmates Jander Ocampo and Jason Sabanal.

Bo La Salle University University of Mindanao, 21-15, and Mapua vs Mindanao State University, 21-13, in the eliminations.

Fatigue overcame Wanstad in the match against MSU as she suffered a mild sprain after landing hard on her left ankle following a jump serve. After a timeout, Wanstad regained her composure and went on to dictate the early Warriors' attack.

ENKA Tiamson (left) and Karina Santos of Ateneo de Davao down their prize in beating Holy Cross of Davao College, 25-16.

SPORTSWATCH

FE-Estate tennis camp listing on

FE-ESTATE SPORTS is the 84-court Sports Foundation Inc. Manila South-woods Tennis Academy summer camp from March. The tennis camp will feature Philippine Davis Cup team coach Manny Dacera at the helm, will be held at the Nanaimo tennis courts of Renaissance Towers in Pasig and Manila Southwoods Sports Club in Carmona, Cavite starting March 15. Session coaches include camp coordinator after successful programs with the Wood Developers Inc. Tennis Academy, Ricky Palacios, Rolando and Kahagana Tennis Academy in Japan. The program was responsible for the women's rise of World No. 1 junior Rysteel Isak and US Junior champion Nanci Dacera. For inquiries, call Linda at 808 9622 and 808 4863 or Jenny at 09 17-808 0163. The program includes group lessons for beginners, intermediate, advance, competitive and intensive and competitive camp. The schedule will be March 29-April 21 for the first batch and May 3-25 for the second batch at the Renaissance Towers, Ortigas, Pasig, and March 27-April 18 for first batch and May 1-22 at the Manila Southwoods.

Vita trips Baga, makes it to hall of fame

VICTORIA Adriano Vita defeated the highly-touted Benedict Baga, 3-2, Saturday in the "Switch for Switch for the No. 1 Ethnic Player" of the Robinsons Malls. Vita, a 31-year-old resident of Bagumbayan, Laguna, trailed his eighth seed opponent, 2-1, in the match for No. 1 Ethnic Nationwide Malls. Arnel Vitpar Ligaoanan and Perennial's Billiards, the official table, and will be awarded into the tournament's hall of fame. The second player to be so after Antonio "Gago" Santos. The feat also earned him a position in the Top-8 Championship at the end of the year. "Although I am no stranger to playing for Ethnic Nationwide, I am very happy and grateful to be the champion this," said Vita. Vita controlled the tempo from the start as he raced to a 3-1 lead in the first four racks. Baga roared within striking distance by winning the fifth rack, but Vita regained possession and claimed the next two frames. In the second match, however, Vita showed signs of exhaustion as he lost by the same score. Vita, who is a regular in the Robinsons tournament from Vita, intended to share a cup the challenge by calling the Consolacion Villarde League on March 28 at 08 08 19808 or log on to www.sunpower-billiardsleague.yahoo.com.

PCCA 5-cock derby unfolds today

THREE days of cockfighting action featuring Metro Manila's leading derby stars starts today with the Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 5-cock Derby at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit. The event, sponsored by Sagasan Farmers' Sagasan Rice Free, Sagasan All-Purpose and Sagasan Corn Grits, will feature 64 cocks in the derby. Derby entries may be pegged at P5,000, according to PCC pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Felino Rosa and Benito Viana. The second round of eliminations (3 cocks) unfolds on Wednesday. Cockers may submit their entries tomorrow from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Qualifiers will figure in the 3-cock finals on Friday. For inquiries, call 832-3948. Among the top cockers in the PCCA derby game are fans from international derby runners-up William Co, Mar Sioco, Randy Tolentino, 2003 World Slasher champ Ray Briones, Jun Fernando of Pampanga, Jun Esparis of Cavite, Rodjie Lim, Jose Lapid, the LA 168 Group, Jun Macaspac and newspaper publisher Jake Macasaet.

BEAM Z-SEXY-2 CHAMPS. Jenna Casanova and Janine Marmol (third and fifth from left) with the runners-up in the boys and girls racer—60-6 Rene Apolinario, Elmea Benevento, Frankie Farungao and Christopher Molino—of the recent Beam Z-sexy-2 Paralahing Pinoy in Pasig City. Pasig Councilor Gregorio Rapisan (center) awarded the prizes and medals.

Pagunsan guns for Samsung Tour title

SAMSUNG lead Sun Yim Eon joins three members of the La Salle-Zobel team—Justin Tanhueng, Miko Alejandro, Ramon Zarate and Yoonick Tuason—which ran amok with the recent second Samsung Intra-Varsity golf tournament at the Manila Southwoods Legends course.

Lethal Long . . .

(Turn to page 24)

Long complained about several non-calls by the referees when Red Bull's frontline ganged up on him.

"It's little difficult. The job assigned to me is to defend. I'm not a wall some time down on me," said Long.

"They did those things to keep me out of the game. They got real physical on me [later]."

Scores:

FEU 82:

ADM. MEDICAL 80—Long 27, Ambrosio 19, Ambrosio 15, Aquino 7, Ardy 7, Dagohoy 5, Ubando 2, Alonzo 2.

FEU 82:—Pua 14, Alcover 12, Ambrosio 12, Fermin 11, Lopez 10, Maglalang 7, Ramos 6, Alcantara 3, Quiambao 2, Agustin 1, Bagtas 0, Ilet 0.

Quarters: 18-7, 40-30, 61-51, 82-77

Second Game

ATENEO CEBU 88—Santos 23, Antonio 20, Tan 13, Bitoon 12, Magalong 12, Pinto 5, Lacsina 3, Valencia 2, Hamoy-an 2, Sanchez, Gil 0, Tan 0.

SAN BEDA 79—Ilagan 22, Nebrida 14, Ilagan 12, Santos 12, Ambrosio 10, Gagarra 7, Sutherland 2, Gabriel, Nebrida 0.

Quarters: 21-10, 42-41, 57-62, 88-79

Modest target for RP triathletes in Asian tilt

CAMBASCO with the Philippines' brightest prospect, Josephine Pfluglf

IT WILL be uphill for local triathletes and Filipino officials won't be caught delivering themselves about RP chances at their calm down for the 2004 Speedo Asian Triathlon Championships set in Subic on April 4-5.

The national triathlon team, headed off-cials said, has failed to respond to training, but Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRAP) president Tom Cambasco was quick to admit that, more than anything else, the coming event will be part of their preparations for next year's 2004 Olympics. Triathlon will be debuting in the Manila SEA Games.

In prepping for a significant showing, Cambasco is pinning hopes on younger team members who, he said, have better chances to make good in the junior sprint division of the two-day event.

"It is time we widen our base of triathletes, that's why we are putting emphasis on the younger triathletes, with the concerns providing leadership and experience," Cambasco explained.

A leads among the top 10 on the men's side and in the top 15 for the women at Subic will be set to day Cambasco said.

"In the juniors, a top-5 finish in the girls' side is a real possibility with our hopes on Josephine Pfluglf and Ian Legaspi, both strong swimmers," Cambasco said.

Pfluglf was discovered by Anthony Lavarias in Puerto Princesa and brought to Manila, the source the Cambasco-led Philippine team for the competition championship in Boracay last year.

After the Asian Championships, TRAP will send the promising athletes to either New Zealand or Australia to attend a training camp and join competitions, while 4-time in the Asian Cup circuit are to be sent to Japan.

Cambasco said they are also conducting training camps here to be held in Subic with the assistance of Japan and the ITTU. He added they would rationalize the coaching system with the appointment of a team manager to handle both the triathlon and the duathlon teams.

All told, Cambasco said his ultimate dream is for a Filipino triathlete to qualify in the 2008 Olympic Games.

After that, Cambasco said he can retire a happy man.

Fight terrorism, poverty, GMA tells PMA cadets

Front page A1

administration the new PMA grads also would "make the Armed Forces (of the Philippines) with better equipment, better training, better compensation that those who graduated years before, more so those who graduate now."

The Class valedictorian, 2nd Lt. Rolly Angeles Evangelista, said the millenial of power that the graduates must feel invested in each PMA graduate was not just symbolic.

"On behalf of my classmates, I would like to thank the Filipino people. Without you, our world will not be here. The P2.1 million we spent for each of us will not be needed," Evangelista said in the short valedictory address now given in the PMA.

"You've got to inspire it to strengthen the country, not to weaken the democracy," Lt. Evangelista said on her speech, alluding to the leaders of the May-Ada group of young officers who tried to stage a mutiny in Makati City and Malacañang in May 2001 but failed. Most of the leaders of the Magdalo group belonged to the PMA Class 1994.

SYMBOLIZING PMA Cadet Rolly Angeles Evangelista, valedictorian of the Philippine Military Academy Class 2004, embraces his mother in jubilation during ceremonies yesterday at Baguio City. ALVIN KASIBANG

Mindanao conflict

The President said she had asked 2nd Lt. Ruel Estelle Sotto, who graduated No. 5 and was born in Pikit, North Cotabato, to help her in the government's peace efforts in his province.

"I told him to help me take care of Pikit. To help me take care of Bulacan. To help me bring lasting peace," Ms Macapagal said, referring to the troubled municipality where the late Islamist Rashim Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader was harbored.

"I am proud to be part of the instrument of change," Acero later said.

At a press conference in Fort del Pilar last week, Acero said he was frustrated by the violence in the province but grew up with more principled by-gone years.

"I wanted to see a soldier who understood completely why my neighbors joined the insurgency. To understand the 'other side,' " he told the reporters.

Acero said that when he was a student in Pikit, helicopters would come to their house and he would see his neighbors outrunning them.

Less Math

Ms Macapagal expressed concern over the high attrition rate of the graduating class and called for less Mathematics and more Humanities and communication skills in the curriculum.

"I was informed by (PMA superintendent) Mes Gen. Isleberto Adan that only 21 percent of the plebes that enter (stay)," she said.

The hindsight, Lt. Sotto, on should have less Math, Science and Engineering subjects and more on English, humanities and communication. The role of soldiers is not only in calculating and applying but in running the hearts of the people and community. You are the custodians of the nation in defense and peace," Ms Macapagal said.

She said the end of the war on the communist and Muslim rebels separatist rebellions were both within reach. "The war on insurgency and secessionism that are ravaging our nation settled on the negotiating table," where diplomacy and skills are important, she said.

She described peace talks with communist insurgency leaders in Norway last month while at the same time clashing her campaign

FPJ letter to Guingona

(following is the full text of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s letter to Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., Ret.)

March 30, 2004

Hon. Teofisto T. Guingona Jr.
Vice President
PICC Bldg., CCP Complex
Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

Dear Vice President Teo,

I write this letter to invite you to become my Adviser on Environment and public policy.

After consideration, let me say that I submit this to your Program of Action embodied in this project such other concepts as you, among others, the following:

1. Reform in the Philippine Judiciary;
2. Enact a new drafting and form drafting a political charter;
3. Give meaning to local autonomy in restoring the role of governors and mayors as partners in socio-economic development pursuant to law and the principal of subsidiarity;
4. Promote national patrimony-wide land in the Constitution so that one-third will be allocated in cooperation with Filipino and Filipino investors, with support from the government, both local and national;
5. Catch the illegal trade and price trade of transitional crimes, drug-related crimes and other crimes that affect the trust of the people;
6. Infuse moral conduct by example and adopt a measure that would enable our upbringing;
7. Do not consider as peace to be Filipinos;
8. Adopt a savings program for OFWs that would benefit to give them social and legal benefits, including support to return to upgrade skills and avail of housing loan when they return.

Although the challenges are awesome, I believe that there is unity and perseverance, all problems have solutions.

With your valued advice, I will strive harder to gain this presidency so that, with the people's will and under God's guidance, I can begin to bring meaningful change in this nation.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,
Fernando Poe Jr.

Even with Tito around, 'Da King' won't debate

Front page A1

City on Saturday night. Poe, popularly known as "Da King of Philippine Movies," said he stood firm on his position: "Debates create divisiveness."

Malacañang earlier challenged the movie actor to reconsider, saying Guingona could help him prepare for such interrogation. The Vice President's position is the country's nobility learners.

In Baguio City, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said Guingona could help. But "clearly the platform of the opposition."

"In these elections, it is not so much a matter of who is qualified but what one has to say about the issues affecting the lives of the average Filipino," she told reporters during a press conference at the Presidential Mansion.

But Poe pointed out that he never lacked for allies and advisers who could tangle with avid gamers from the Senate. He said Guingona was invited to join the Kalikasan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino for bigger reasons than to engage the competition in debate.

The Vice President is the fourth leader from Mindanao in his camp, the actor said, after ornamental candidates Agnelino Emerald Jr. Aurora Pijo and Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr.

"With four of them, we can give just a fraction of the problems here in Mindanao," Poe said. "This is one of our priorities."

Even in his two-hour morning lashes in his friendly rant life for with the news, Guingona acknowledged enthusiasm that while Poe was politely unsure in his desire to serve, he might fall short on "fundamental capability."

Pressed if he meant to fill such a void, Guingona said, "No. He invited me to help him. I might have more experience." (*See full text of Poe's letter on this page.*)

PMA rites

Ms Macapagal had gone to Baguio to Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, to commission the members of Philippine Military Academy's Makiyabi Class 2004. (*See related story on page A1.*)

Conspicuously absent from the event, the academy's 99th graduation, was held at College Assurance Plan Johns Hop Trade and Cultural Center, was Guingona. He was expected to present the Vice President's Saber to An Pure 2nd Lt. Gerald Philip Escalona, who graduated magna cum laude.

Escalona received his saber instead from Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Due to her word about dropping an official campaign position, Ms Macapagal did not want to the rounds during the drive to Jobs Has After the ceremony, she left without shaking the hands of onlookers.

Looking head, leading to the site, was a flotilla of security cars and posters of the President's rivals.

Likewise, witnesses that posed the question, "How about law and order?" had been hung earlier by the camp of presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a superintendent in Class 1971. Rich a report from Sita Carol Calbreas, *PDI* Staff Writer, Lauren Ramos

Madrid blast again rouses world to condemn terrorism

Front page A1

Spanish student who said, "It is not wrong. Madrid is crying."

In many other cities in Europe, Israel, Beirut and the United States, thousands marched in the streets to denounce the bombings—whose atrocity recalled the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States. Condemnation of the Madrid bombings swelled up from most of the world, including the Philippines.

The bombings, described as a "massacre" and "carnage," are now reckoned to at Spain's least 200 victims. The number of injured could soar the bombings that mark an escalation of terrorist action since Sept. 11, in which bigger civilian casualties are targeted.

It is unclear what groups were behind the bombings that mark an escalation of terrorist action since Sept. 11, in which bigger civilian casualties are targeted.

Ties to condemnation

The Madrid massacre again raises the question whether our allegiance with the United States in the war on terror would make us one safer from terrorist attacks. Or even allegiance would open us, given that we have been identified as a source of terrorist groups linked to al Qaeda.

Once again, the world has been warned to be constantly terrorism. The Campaign Parliament called the Madrid attack "the worst act of terror in the memory of any European state."

King Juan Carlos of Spain called the massacre "an act of barbarism" and Interior Chief Jose Pedro Perez-Tremps said "this is mass murder," while Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar described it as "blind and repugnant evil."

French President Jacques Chirac, who did not back the US-led invasion of Iraq, said in the bombings "are an attack against all democracies."

Spain is one of the countries, including ours, that joined the United States in the coalition of the willing" in the global campaign against terror, leading to the invasion of Iraq. We can identify with the Spanish carnage.

Four years ago, we had a foretaste of terror attacks on action centers when bombs exploded at the LRT during the Christmas season, killing and injuring scores of people. Until now, we don't know who for the LRT bombing was connected to the military campaign against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or was the work of the Abu Sayyaf.

Intl condemnation

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Arab leagues and the Palestinian Authority forcibly condemned the attacks as "terrorist acts aimed at killing civilians." Citizens from 10 other countries were among the 191 people killed.

Indonesia, where terrorists tied to the Bali bombings, said the attacks provided "further proof of the inhuman cruelties of terrorism as a global menace that strikes anywhere at any time."

President Macapagal-Arroyo called for heightened vigilance while she condemned the attack as "absolutely evil."

The Spanish government said it believed that ETA was most likely to blame for the bombing, although it did not rule out the possibility of other groups following disclosure of a letter to a London Arabic newspaper claiming responsibility for the bombing. The letter was attributed to a group linked to al-Qaeda.

Prime Minister Aznar has been one of the staunchest allies of the United States in the war on terror campaign. He has been engaged in a crackdown on the ETA, a campaign that has reduced the group's attacks. The Basque guerilla Batasuna "rejected" the bombings and was confirmed the ETA was not responsible.

Press reports from Madrid say that suspicions of whether the bombings were carried out by ETA or al-qaeda. Spain's quality of landscape has been transformed just three days before general elections. Aznar, who is retiring, did not amend the election campaign, but he suspended it as required by law. He has pledged that it is crackdown on the ETA.

Aznar survived a 1995 assassination attempt by the ETA. The bombing is believed to have ended his party's victory in the election, although under Aznar, Spain's administration, the Spanish economy has enjoyed a successful growth of 3 percent annually.

US election issue

Whether the Madrid attack would help ES President George W. Bush in his reelection bid is not clear, but it would highlight the issue of 20 terrors, a key one in the November presidential election.

The independent newspaper of London reported from Washington that the attacks would be taken by the Bush administration in its "further unequivocal proof that terrorism is the worldwide scourge of the 21st century. Bush's campaign has already underlined that there can be negotiation with terrorists, only total destruction."

The Telegraph newspaper in London reflected a perspective almost like the sympathy of the members of the Madrid massacre. It said the bombings had "set a dreadful new standard of violence by terrorists—be they the core friend of Islamists or Basque separatists radical movements."

"To be satisfied in the age of mass terror," the paper commented, "it is no longer enough for governments to kill individuals or dozens of people. They now need aim for scores or hundreds of deaths."

Manuel Conti, a Spanish Bank Bank recently stated, who spoke on the morning, "hope it's not true. It's been a quite active year. Small attacks are no longer adequate."

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Rape kits could tell the true story

From page A1

The DNA lab in UP can now implement what it had proposed: validate a prototype acceptance kit, standardize its required system for rape investigations and storage of evidence, and train the lawyers, judiciary on the proper interpretation of forensic DNA evidence in the courtrooms.

He, science knows better than lawmakers and there's a lot that judges and criminal lawyers could learn from the newly lab technician.

De Ungria said that with the advent of forensic DNA technology as a powerful investigative tool in the prompt resolution of criminal cases, an efficient and accurate system must be developed for the collection, analysis and storage of biological evidence. Rape kits form part of this technology.

A rape kit consists of several collection tubes with caps in different colors, cotton swabs for collecting samples from different parts of the victim's body (vagina, maternal genitalia, anus, mouth and throat), small envelopes for the collection tubes, instructions on how to gather samples, preserve, pack, seal, preserve (at what temperature, etc.) and transport.

Also included are a sexual assault case history sheet to be filled up and signed by the interviewer and medical examiner, and a check list of the samples collected to be signed by the health practitioner who collected the samples. Pieces of clothing (like underwear) that might contain samples should be included, too.

Chain of custody

The "chain of custody" is very important, De Ungria stressed. This means that the samples collected should land in the right hands and agencies. Shenanigans at companies might be tapped for risk endeavor.

The DNA lab in UP has a working partnership with the Child Protection Unit of the UP-Philippine General Hospital, which screens women and children victims of sexual abuse. The UP-PGH-CPU and selected CPU units will be testing the prototype kits.

Dr. Ungria said samples should be gathered immediately and preferably before the victim washes his/her or his genital or anal area so that the semen of the rapist or rapists could be collected.

He cited a case that involved a 10-year-old child from whose samples were taken two days after the crime. "We were successful in our analysis," De Ungria said.

The country has four institutions with DNA testing labs, namely, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine National Police, the St. Luke's Medical Center, and UP-NIH. Lukes's accepts only patients' cases for private clients.

The UP-NIH does forensic research and accepts child, criminal and disaster cases as part of its extension work. Its personnel readily testify in court.

Profiling

Forensic DNA technology, De Ungria explained, has been greatly influenced by the so-called Human Genome Project that aimed to sequence the entire human genome. The American Academy of Forensic Science defines forensic science as "the application of scientific principles and technological practices to the purposes of matter in the study and resolution of criminal cases and regulatory issues."

A person's DNA profile, De Ungria said, serves as his DNA print that may be used to identify him and trace his activities that could be used as crime scene evidence. He added that current techniques to generate and analyze DNA profiles can exhibit of analyzing even minuscule amounts of crime scene evidence, hence the immense impact of DNA technology in forensic investigations.

Identifying persons through the use of forensic DNA analysis is the juxtaposition of the total genetic makeup of each individual concept in the case of identical twins), which is contained in most cells, De Ungria said.

Are there no errors? Boy? Rape kits said DNA testing could help pinpoint the guilty and free the innocent. Many instances in death row could be found truly innocent of rape charges. The wrongful) could be convicted and the victims could find justice at last.

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NO PLATE, NO TRAVEL POLICY

NCRPO cautions motorists

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) is asking motorists to be wary of police men in traffic personnel who may be out to make quick money from the "no plate, no travel" policy currently being enforced.

NCRPO spokesperson Insp. Reynaldo Mercado warned that only the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the Traffic Enforcement Group and deputized traffic policemen could arrest vehicles and issue traffic violation receipts (TVRs) in relation to the policy.

PO3 Pedro Flores of the NCRPO public information office said deputized linemen carry valid TVRs which show recognized dates on the second page of the receipt.

Flores said motorists could look for the validity date on the TVR or ask for the officer's name, rank and unit issued by the MMDA if they are accosted.

On Friday, NCRPO Director Roberto B. Lastr relieved PO1 Randy Gallardo, who performed an extralegal apprehension involving two tricycle drivers whom vehicles had no license plates that allegedly demanded P1,000 from them.

After four days of re-implementation of the policy, a total of 982 vehicles with no license plates had been flagged down, and 30 were impounded.

The owners of impounded vehicles face a P1,000 fine.

Meanwhile, 99 motorists were issued TVRs for driving vehicles that had no license plates or which had unauthorized plates or expired commemorative plates.

Also, 421 drivers were warned for not yet claiming their license plates. They were given 15 days to get their plates from the Land Transportation Office. With a report from Margaux Ortiz

A BEAM of light that managed to pierce the collapsed roof of the cyclone-hit Las Piñas Public Market illuminates cleaned-down stall where two boys desperately search for coins. AP/Aaron Favila

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Hourlong fire destroys P12M in Las Piñas

FIRE razed the Las Piñas Public Market early yesterday morning and destroyed P12 million worth of goods and property.

BFOI Director Wallan said the fire of still unknown origin began at 5:23 a.m. inside a vacant stall at the dry goods section and quickly spread.

A total of 21 firetrucks responded to prevent the blaze from spreading to nearby houses at the Zapote Junction.

The fire was put under control at 6:30 a.m. but was only totally put out at 11:00 a.m.

Meanwhile, residents of the burnt house blame that hit the Port area in Manila, are staying on the streets near the abandoned warehouse of the Philippine Ports Authority, which they had turned into their home.

Manila's social welfare chief Jose Atienza said some 800 families were being sheltered in tents outside the nearby Red Cross Office.

But Manila's Bureau of Fire Protection had initially estimated the fire victims at 1,400 families.

Atienza said the local government was providing meals and drinking water to the fire victims.

He added that the city could not give any construction materials to rebuild their homes. Margaux Ortiz and Steve Quimpo

Curtains are off on kids' buses

By Margaux Ortiz

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will allow school buses to put up curtains and blinds to protect young students from the heat.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Weigel de Dios yesterday said the school buses would be exempted from the policy that bans all public utility buses in Metro Manila from putting up curtains or heavy tints.

He explained that the policy was implemented to prevent crimes such as robbery from taking place inside buses.

Weigel de Dios announced the exemption of school buses from the policy after a school bus driver, Gerardo Mayor, complained that the absence of curtains was hurting eyesight of children on his passengers, mostly nursery and kindergarten students.

He said many of the children suffered from vomiting and fainting spells because of the sun's heat.

Weigel de Dios said the ban on curtains was staying for all buses and public vehicles playing Metro Manila's streets.

tanong ng Bayan

May pag-asa pa ba si Roco?

ABC

Jiro youngest ever to win as best actor

By Marinel R. Cruz

CHILD actor Jiro Manio made history in acting awards by being the youngest performer to top 9 to be named best actor in the Sabandeo's 2003 Star Awards for movies held at the Teatro Arlaco Bicolo in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Manio beat veteran Actors Christopher de Leon ("Mano Po 2"), Richard Gomez ("Filipinas"), Aga Muhlach ("Kung Ako Na Lang Sana") Lor Montano ("Huling Birhen Sa Lupa"), as well as his cousin Albert Martinez ("Magnifico") for the best actor trophy.

Manio, who enters the limelight started and Aiyanthy Bern in "Magnifico," broke the record set by Bong Revilla, who was 13 years old when he won best actor for "Bulag Pi" in 1998.

"Magnifico" cooped off with most of the major awards last Saturday night, including The highly coveted movie of the year plum for producer Violet Bernardo of Violet Films.

The director of the year honor went to international Mario Lo de los Reyes, who formerly won the Gawad Urian award for Best Picture film in the 70s Enderella ten of the Bella Flor Award.

"I became the last national of Acting the would know about the Filipino people's inner goodness," De los Reyes told to his acceptance speech.

There's hope

"I told people in Bollo that the local film industry is bewildered, lost and dying," he added. "I take it back. There will be a lot more producers and the audiences to patronize local movies."

Isabella de Leon collected the award for best child performer for her compelling performance as Bebot, Boy's younger sister who was born with cerebral palsy.

Michael Valencia bagged the screenplay of the year award, also for "Magnifico," while Odyssey Rivera took home for second best cinematography trophy for the same movie.

The best movie editor award was given to Manet Dayrit for his work both on "Magnifico" and "Mano Po 2."

Comedian Ai-Ai de las Alas also pulled a surprise by winning the best actress award for her movie "Ang Tanging Ina."

The seven-core veteran dramatic actress Sharon Cuneta ("Crying Ladies"), Lovie Poe ("Magnifico") and Maricel Soriano ("Filipinas"), as well as Zoe Tea Pedida ("Mano Po 2") and Ara Mina ("Huling Birhen Sa Lupa").

"This is my first award in my 13 years in show biz," actress said. She also said, "I dedicate this to mothers all over the world, who are working hard for the sake of their children."

The PMPC celebrated its 20th anniversary last sunday night by honoring some of the best movie directors, actors and actresses from 1994 to 2003.

Marilou Diaz-Abaya ("Muel"), Ruel Bayo ("Pitumbuhin") and Joel Lamangan ("Hot Temperature") were named the movie directors of the decade.

Eddy Devoa, Christopher de Leon and Philip Salvador were proclaimed Tatlong Mare Actor awardees, while Jhanee Cuneta, Mimi Juanico and Pinti Agnes Dibuko Manio Actress awardees.

Heartwarming Show

"I will not grow tired of making meaningful films," said superstar Nora Aunor, who came to the ceremony crowned and flowing malligo gown.

The four-time best actress awardee also thanked Lamangan, who was babysat her critically acclaimed films "Pisay Generation" and "Bakit May Bukas Pa."

Eddy Devoa and Peter Mel received their second best supporting actor trophies for "Crying Ladies" and "Filipinas," respectively.

Gov. Ray Boko ("Lastikman") and Pen Medina ("First Romance") are this year's best new movie actors.

'Ulirang Artista'

Sharon Cuneta, actress and wife of presidential candidate Pimentalo Fernando, is the year's recipient of the Ulirang Artista Lifetime Achievement award.

Best supporting actress nominee Gloria Romero ("Magnifico") and Ali dia Gutierrez, who played opposite Roco in many of her movies in the 70s, presented the award.

"This award is very meaningful to me," said Roco. "I started my movie career in a Gloria Romero film. Now that's breaking my record.

"I dedicate this to the Vice Presidential family who was responsible for many of the movies I've made in the past, and to the entire press, who are unlike any panahons. I've been a good person, and today I'm happy as a kinda."

Claire de Guzman, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia, was given herself for the Night, while sweet hearts Aga Muhlach and Cristine Hermosa were named Stars of the Night.

Ogie Alcasid received another trophy for best movie theme song for the theme of "Ako Kikay" "Hanggang Ka Ang Hanga Ko," who is also and Gladys glitz de Leon and Regine Velasquez.

The best musical score plum went to Jessie Lasaw for "Filipinas," best musical sound to Albert Michael Idioma for "Mano Po 2," and best production design to Rodell Cruz for "Mano Po 2."

JIRO makes history

Shootout mars entrapment ops; 1 killed

By Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.

A SIGHT was killed, his girlfriend was injured, while three other men were arrested during an alleged shootout between them and policemen in Quezon City the other day.

Police said some of the suspects opened fire at the police men who were carrying out an entrapment operation against the group.

Reported Tan died of a gunshot wound in his nape, while Analyn Bagrillo, 20, suffered a minor wound in her back.

Police said they had set up an entrapment operation against Tan's group, suspected to be drug financiers, by leasing equipment using bogus checks. The operation was arranged after the General Industrial Corporation sought the assistance of the police.

The company had allegedly received another order for equipment from Tan's group. Prior to this, Tan had paid for equipment he ordered but the check bounced, the company said.

During the scheduled pickup of the equipment on Saturday a shootout ensued when the suspects opened fire at the police team right after arresting three alleged members of Tan's group.

Tan died on the spot while Bagrillo was brought to the Quezon City General Hospital.

Those arrested were Jerry Mendoza, Jerry Ramos and Jerry Ramos, all residents of Quezon City.

She still weeps for Mark Welson

By Tarra Quismundo

IT WAS been three years and the still weeps.

"It will never be healed. I still cry for him, as somebody who lost her child," said Annie Chua, as she spoke of the loss of her son, Mark Welson.

Mark Welson Chua was killed exactly three years ago today. He was then 19, a second year mechanical engineering student at the University of Santo Tomas.

He would have been 22, and would have graduated this year.

Mark's mother would say it with the moments she shared with him, when she described to a sweet and loving son.

"He made us laugh with his jokes. He was not that showy, but we knew he loved us very much," said Annie Chua.

Those memories were abruptly ended by Mark's brutal death.

On this day in 2001, Chua's family received a call from a man who said he abducted Mark. The man demanded a 10-million ransom.

Hide forced and Peter Mel received their second best supporting actor trophies for "Crying Ladies" and "Filipinas," respectively.

Gov. Ray Boko ("Lastikman") and Pen Medina ("First Romance") are this year's best new movie actors.

'Ulirang Artista'

Sharon Cuneta, actress and wife of presidential candidate Pimentalo Fernando, is the year's recipient of the Ulirang Artista Lifetime Achievement award.

Best supporting actress nominee Gloria Romero ("Magnifico") and Ali dia Gutierrez, who played opposite Roco in many of her movies in the 70s, presented the award.

"This award is very meaningful to me," said Roco. "I started my movie career in a Gloria Romero film. Now that's breaking my record.

"I dedicate this to the Vice Presidential family who was responsible for many of the movies I've made in the past, and to the entire press, who are unlike any panahons. I've been a good person, and today I'm happy as a kinda."

Claire de Guzman, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia, was given herself for the Night, while sweet hearts Aga Muhlach and Cristine Hermosa were named Stars of the Night.

Ogie Alcasid received another trophy for best movie theme song for the theme of "Ako Kikay" "Hanggang Ka Ang Hanga Ko," who is also and Gladys glitz de Leon and Regine Velasquez.

The best musical score plum went to Jessie Lasaw for "Filipinas," best musical sound to Albert Michael Idioma for "Mano Po 2," and best production design to Rodell Cruz for "Mano Po 2."

Greetings and Congratulations to:

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by the University of St. Lasallle-Bacolod and
Commencement Speaker during the
Graduation rites on
March 14, 2004, at the La Salle Gym

From: The Management and STAFF of Vallacar Transit, Inc. (Ceres Liner)

These babies need immediate help

MARIE Annie C. Mendoza and Al Francis Garcia are both afflicted with biliary atresia, a rare disease that destroys the liver. Only a liver transplant can save them.

Such an operation costs P350,000 here. The parents of Mark and Al Francis are appealing for help.

For those who want to help Mark, you can call (09)39[illegible] or send the donation to Mark 22 Lot 33 Acacia Avenue, Renaissance, Cainta.

Donations to Al Francis can be given at 303 Gen. Luis St., Barangay Kinalipi, Cabuyao City. You can also call his family at 272-2816 or (09)19363745.

Five-year-old Glenn Lloyd Bernard, on the other hand, is suffering from a congenital heart disease, ventricular septal defect with subsidiary hypoplasia.

He also needs surgery.

You can call his family at 440-2224 or at (09)22 (09)49473.

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Lito Real D. Manalo
Assistant Editor Connie S. Nolasco

Maynilad offers debt-equity swap deal

By Christine A. Gaylican

MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. has proposed a debt-for-equity swap deal with its creditors to settle some P18 billion in outstanding obligations.

Governmental sources privy to the negotiations between the Lopez-owned Maynilad, the government-led Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the creditor banks said the next joint concessionaire was also offering bond issues to its creditors as it tries to regain financial viability.

The MWSS is on top of Maynilad's list of creditors with an exposure of P6 billion representing unpaid concession fees. The company's other creditors accounting for the remaining P18 billion in obligations are Credit Agricole, Indosuez Merchant Bank Asia Ltd., Citibank NA, Barclays Bank PLC and BNP Paribas, Equitable PCI Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and the government Development Bank of the Philippines.

Under Maynilad's proposal, MWSS is to be given control of about 60 percent of the west concession area.

Under the proposed Amendment No. 2 to the Concession Agreement, the company to be controlled by the MWSS would be called the New Maynilad, the 7-member board of directors of Maynilad would be composed of four government appointees and three representatives from the bank creditors.

Ramon Holdings and its foreign partner, Hydro Philippines Inc., will remain as minority shareholders.

"This is an option for the creditors to take. They would be given a direct hand in seeing that Maynilad could be turned back to financial stability and they would be assured that they get paid in maybe two to three years," an MWSS source explained.

Maynilad said that as of Dec. 31, 2003, it had P17.58 billion in liabilities as against P16.94 billion in assets.

Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee, who heads the MWSS panel and the Office Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC), confirmed in an interview that the two part of the "court-judicial negotiations" being undertaken by the MWSS and Maynilad.

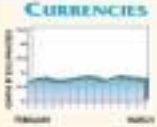
"We would like to point out that we are aiming for an amicable settlement, but this does not mean that we will compromise the government's interest in the negotiations," Teehankee said.

He stated that they were pushing for the decision of the International Arbitration Committee led by a representative from the International Chamber of Commerce that Maynilad must settle all its debts.

Up to now, the MWSS could still not say the P120-million performance bond of Maynilad that

(CONTINUED ON B2)

CURRENCIES



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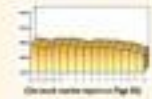
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



INTEREST RATES

Market: US DOLLARS	Bid/Ask	Bid/Ask
Indicator	12-Mar-04	11-Mar-04
Rates		
1 Month	1.00	1.13
2 Months	1.13	1.13
3 Months	1.13	1.13
4 Months	1.13	1.13
5 Months	1.13	1.13
6 Months	1.13	1.13
7 Months	1.13	1.13
8 Months	1.13	1.13
9 Months	1.13	1.13
10 Months	1.13	1.13
11 Months	1.13	1.13
12 Months	1.13	1.13

Security concerns to dampen trading

LOCAL stock bellwigs expected to remain bullishly on global terrorist threats resurfaced last week, spending major markets abroad.

"Investors are likely to stay sidelined given the recent security developments abroad (in the aftermath of several bombings at train stations in Madrid, Spain). Already government bans a major terrorist attack may be imminent in the country and has asked its neighbors for information. Renewed fears of international terrorism has cast a cloud of uncertainty not only locally but also abroad," BPI Securities said in its weekly outlook.

Grace Dantes of online brokerage 27trade.com said caution continued to be the tone played by investors this week with cues to be taken from developed capital markets like Wall Street and how authorities abroad address the recent bombings (incidents).

"Set against this backdrop, it will not be unusual for players to see bottom-trades, and attention is likely to stay selective on undervalued performers for the second quarter of 2004," she said.

With the dampened sentiment, share prices tumbled to a two-and-a-half month low of 1,831.19 last week, closing off 48 points or 2.5 percent.

Jose Perez of RB Capital Securities said it did not help hearing of weakening foreign investor sentiment after reports that the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) could drop the Philippines from its investment list.

Philippine Associates Inc., which acts as the fund's advisor, suggested the sale of Calpers' $67 million worth of Philippine stocks, according to reports, as the Philippines' score was still below the two-point cutoff to qualify as among the

(CONTINUED ON B2)

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CalPERS urged to keep RP investments

By Percy B. Ocita
Correspondent

SACRAMENTO—On their own time, Filipino-American state employees are expected to join Philippine Ambassador to the US Alfredo del Rosario Monday in convincing their pension fund—the nation's largest—not to pull out its investments from the Philippines.

In a meeting in downtown Sacramento, the investment committee of the California Public Employees' Retirement System is due to release the results of its review of the pre-invisible equity market coming to the Philippines.

Last month, CalPERS gave the country a temporary reprieve after Del Rosario told local officials that the Philippine Congress had enacted investor, child labor and banking laws that would give the country a passing grade to stave off divestment by the $154-billion pension fund.

In a statement released to the Inquirer, the Filipino-American State Employee Association, which will join Del Rosario's appeal tomorrow, said: "Over time, the Philippines will continue to meet CalPERS' standards for the future of its people."

Through its president Sid Morcalbas, the Board also said: "We would like to emphasize that there are in excess of 3,000 state employees of Filipino descent who have and are contributing to the $87 million that CalPERS has invested in the Philippines."

Last year, CalPERS threatened to pull out its Philippine investments, citing problems on political and market stability.

Aside from the Philippines, CalPERS has also warned three other emerging economies—Turkey, Peru and Argentina—to improve market and political conditions or face the fund's divestment.

CalPERS invests $2.6 billion in international equity markets in emerging economies across the globe.

"These investments have the potential for handsome payoffs. But they can also carry great peril. To minimize investment, CalPERS and its consultant, Wilshire Associates, rates the 27 countries according to their political stability, market volatility, shareholder protection, and stock trading costs.

Of the 27 countries reviewed, only 12 received a passing grade. Three countries got passing grades because of an endorsement of their financial statements by a major Efirm review.

If the Philippines is taken off the permissible list, the country can be viewed as a risky and unattractive investment location.

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Steel plant assured of power supply

SAN JOSE, Bulacan—Steel Asia Manufacturing Corp. has lined up power deals to ensure adequate power and industrial water supply as the steel plant it is building in Barangay Matungao here nears completion.

The steel company, which acquired San Miguel Corp.'s integrated steel mill here in 2002, has signed agreements with Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and the National Power Corp. (Napocor) to supply the power needs of the plant, which is expected to start commercial operations in the second quarter of this year.

Steel Asia has also signed a deal with the Bulacan Water District to supply the plant's water needs.

Steel Asia Chairman Antonio Cabangon-Chua said the company has already invested $300 million in the plant, which has the capacity to produce 1.5 million metric tons of steel billets annually.

Cabangon-Chua said the company is also looking at the possibility of putting up a power plant in the area to supply its own power needs.

"We are looking at the possibility of putting up a power plant, but we have not yet decided on the size of the plant," he said.

Steel Asia is also looking at the possibility of putting up a cement plant in the area, Cabangon-Chua said.

Steel Asia is a unit of Steel Asia Manufacturing Corp., which is listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Land reform gets ₱9B in ODA

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES is set to receive some P9 billion worth of official development assistance (ODA) from eleven foreign donors to build more farm-to-market roads and provide support services for agrarian reform communities nationwide, according to the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Newly-installed Agrarian Reform Secretary Ivan Mikey Power said in an interview Friday that the governments of France and Belgium as well as the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Asian Development Bank were willing to co-finance the construction of rural networks and provide training assistance to prepare farmers to harvest their new

"The governments of France and BE are willing to provide P2.6 billion worth of ODA to build bridges and other infrastructure that will link remote agrarian reform communities to major cities," Power told the Inquirer.

He noted that these bilateral agreements had been sealed by the signing of separate MOU (memorandum of understanding) with representatives from the Italian, French and British governments.

ODA loans from foreign donor have soft repayment terms. The principals, however, are still undergoing further evaluation by the interagency Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) led by the National Economic and Development Authority.

Multilateral donors IBC and ADB are, on the other hand, willing to extend the life of current ODA projects.

"We are working on the third phase of the Agrarian Communities Infrastructure Support Project of JBIC that could provide additional funding of between P5 billion and P6-billion," said Power.

Another P1 billion to P2 billion could be provided by the ADB for the second phase of the Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP).

Power said the cause of the delay in the implementation of the ADB project, which is budgetary constraints, would soon be addressed.

"We now have the necessary counterpart funds to implement the ARCP, which primarily focuses on the support services for agrarian reform communities in far-flung areas," he said.

DAR recently received its initial amount of P75 billion from the P20-billion-worth loan from the Development Bank of the Philippines (LBP).

This amount will be used by DAR for its budget utilization year.

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COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE COMPETITIVE heat between San Miguel Corp. and Asia Brewery is all the more being stoked these sizzling, summer days with the launching of Asia Brewery's Ultra to go head-to-head against San Miguel's best selling Light.

The Lucio Tan boys have even continued the impish, mocking tone of its Beer na Beer ad campaign with Ultra, the "low carbohydrate" iteration of Asia Brewery's import brand, Lone Star.

"Ultra leaves Light in the dark," trumpets the teaser ad to herald Friday's launch of the brew.

Light beer and strong beer are now the growth areas as far as the local market is concerned.

According to an Asia Brewery official, Pale Pilsen has slid down to just half of San Miguel's beer sales, the other half being eaten up by Light and San Miguel's strong beer brand, Red Horse. This claim, however, could not be independently verified; San Miguel does not give out market breakdown of its beer sales.

Somehow, Pale Pilsen, the traditional market leader, is now locally viewed as "old fashioned" or "working class" drink, which is strange, considering that in Hong Kong's expat bars, Caucasian customers ordering San Miguel are served, not the territory's locally brewed version, but by the stout, dark bottled import from the Philippines, signifying its cool/hip factor.

The Pale Pilsen "hip" factor in Hong Kong is, incidentally, similar to Corona's during the early '80s in the United States, when the traditionally working-class beer from Mexico achieved cult status in its northerly neighbor.

To gain market share, Ultra is being sold to retailers at, hic, P290 per 24-bottle case, as against Light's P312/case.

Tightlipped on uplift

EQUITABLE PCI Bank has introduced a fascinating obfuscation in what is otherwise straightforward reporting checklist of the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Instead of selecting either "acquired" or "disposed," EPCIB reported that its in-house ESC Investments had "uplift" a total of 68,072,760 bank shares last month.

Similarly, EPCIB director Frank Go, who had steadily been disposing his bank shareholdings the past few months, "uplift" 10,000 shares in February, reported EPCIB corporate secretary Nilo Divina.

Not only were we puzzled by the term, even the PSE disclosure department, like Cocktales, called up Divina and ESC Investments chief Sergio Naranjilla Jr. to ask for a lowdown on "uplift"; both executives were said to be in Baguio last Friday to attend a bank marketing drive and did not return phone calls.

Not for the lack of drive, Cocktales also texted both cell phones of EPCIB president Antonio Go to request for an explanation. How presumptuous of us.

Supreme Court scam

THE SUPREME Court last week stripped off the retirement benefits of an executive assistant of recently retired Justice Santiago Kapunan after the aide was found to have asked for lobby money from a group of litigants whose case had been assigned to Kapunan.

Nicomedes de los Reyes "would have been dismissed from office" had he not retired in May 2002 after a high court investigation found out that the Kapunan aide had asked and received three checks, with P31 million in face value, from a group of dismissed employees of Dole Philippines.

The employees had been fighting for a total of P600 million in back wages and De los Reyes claimed he would turn over the money to Kapunan and his daughter-in-law in return for a favorable decision.

To bolster his claim, De los Reyes even mailed one of the petitioners a purported draft copy of the favorable decision.

As it turned out, the ex-Dole employees lost the case after the Kapunan division in September 2001 voted against their P600-million claim.

Heard through the grapevine

MIFFED residents of Punta Fuego met with developer Pedro Roxas at the Manila Polo Club Thursday demanding to know why the upscale Batangas resort-subdivision still has no potable water after all these years.

Despite the water shortage, Roxas is launching the third phase expansion for the country's version of the Hamptons, which all the more grates the Punta Fuegans.

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5th Prize: One (1) Winner of Nikon Digital Camera (CoolPix [illegible])
6th Prize: One (1) Winner of Palm PC (P[illegible])
7th Prize: One (1) Winner of JVC Television (SCART 21" [illegible])
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Alarming contrasts

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

FOR decades, the Philippines has stood out among its more progressive neighbors, especially in terms of its social and economic circumstances. Unfortunately, we have stood out not by way of excelling, but by lagging sorely behind.

These contrasts are highlighted at the outset of the recently concluded study by De La Salle University economists Ponciano S. Intal Jr., Gerardo Largoza and Clarita Amoranto entitled "Society, Economy and Philippine Development: Towards a Social Market Economy Framework for Philippine Development." Looking at these contrasts, one gets the feeling that we Filipinos just can't do things the way our nearest neighbors can, to the point of feeling like we don't belong in this part of the world.

Lagging productivity

The study starts by pointing to the economy's glaring productivity gap with its neighbors. The Philippines stands out among the Southeast and East Asian countries as having the lowest growth of labor productivity (output per worker) and total factor productivity since the 1960s.

Whereas Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Taiwan and Korea all experienced accelerating growth in labor and total factor productivity since the 1960s, the Philippines was the only country among the group that even did into negative productivity growth in the 1980s, and remained sluggish up to the early '90s.

Average annual labor productivity growth in the seven countries was 4.6 percent by the early '90s, up from 3.2 percent in the 1950s.

On the other hand, Philippine labor productivity growth was 2.3 percent in the 1950s, slipped into negative annual growth rates of -2.0 in the 1980s, and barely recovered at 0.7 percent in the early '90s. Annual growth rate of total factor productivity averaged a mere 0.2 percent in the 1960s, dipped to -4.6 percent in the 1980s, and was stagnant at 0.0 percent in the early '90s.

Little wonder then that our productivity has experienced declining international competitiveness that led to pressures for increased protectionism, and decreased level of confidence among Philippine producers that they can compete effectively in the global marketplace.

Low public investment

Another contrast is in how government capital expenditures in the Philippines account for the lowest share of total capital expenditures among the seven countries named.

In 2000-2002, the share averaged less than 9 percent for the Philippines, against 18.2 percent for Thailand, 16 percent for Malaysia, and 43 percent for Indonesia. The result? Inferior infrastructure facilities relative to our competitors' economic needs, which is readily evident to anyone traveling around the region.

Social expenditures in the country likewise pale in comparison in what our neighbors invest in this crucial budget item. Thailand and Malaysia spend about two fifths of their budgets for the social sector, the Philippines only one fourth.

Clearly these two countries have been investing much more than the Philippines in two critical areas of productivity and competitiveness: infrastructure and human resources. Unless we are able to close this public investment gap, we are destined to remain uncompetitive in the international economy, and condemned to lag behind indefinitely vis-a-vis the future.

Social reform

In the words of the La Salle study, "social inequality in the country is narrowing and worrying. The country appears to be sitting on a social volcano that may eventually erupt unless the root problems of social inequality and poverty are adequately addressed." The income share of the richest one-fifth of the population was 53.3 times that of the poorest one-fifth in 1990; the ratio had grown to 53.9 in 2000.

This is much higher than that of Thailand (11.04, Singapore (9.3), China (7.0), Indonesia (6.6), Vietnam (5.6), India (5.0) and Sri Lanka (4.4). The ratio is 8.9 for the US, 7.1 for Canada, and 4.3 for Japan. If it's any consolation, income distribution is even worse in Malaysia, where the ratio is 22.1, and no worse in Latin America, exemplified by Brazil where the ratio is 32.1.

However, incidence of poverty in the Philippines is far worse than in Malaysia and many Latin American countries.

The proportion of total population below the UN poverty line of US$1 a day is about 15 percent, while it is almost nil for Malaysia. The latest released official number from 51 percent in 1999 to a remarkable 0.4 percent in 2000. Indonesia, in spite of having been hardest hit by the Asian crisis than the Philippines, actually had a poverty incidence of only 7.5 percent in 2000, even though it started out with a slightly higher poverty incidence than the Philippines in 1990.

A distinct RP-style development

With all the above contrasts, the inevitable question is, why? The answer, of course, is complex, and is rooted in certain historical, structural, historical and political circumstances of the country. For this reason, the La Salle study asserts the need for a development approach unique to the Philippines, drawing especially on the positive elements in its culture, and overcoming the negative ones.

The study suggests the Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao* as the potential core value around which a unique Philippine social market economy development approach can be formulated. After all, there should not be a "one-size fits all" approach to development.

Comments welcome at cfhabito@ateneo.edu

Security concerns . . .

From page B1

permissible investment size for GFIMS.

Veneracion said the continued uncertainty in the political arena grew louder with leading presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. stating he would consider restructuring the country's sovereign debt as part of his agenda.

"Poe's statements sent shivers down investors' spines, prompting calls for clarification. Tonight (Wednesday), Philippine Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that Poe should clarify his position on the country's debt problem, as his statement may be misinterpreted as a call for debt repudiation," Veneracion noted.

"(This) week, investors are likely to look at developments abroad for guidance. The bombings in Madrid are likely to remain fresh in the minds of investors. Moreover, political uncertainties related to the upcoming May elections will continue to weigh on market sentiment," Veneracion said. — Elizabeth J. Sanchez

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NTC warns TV, radio stations on texting promos

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission has warned television networks and radio stations not to launch promotional gimmicks using mobile phone services without the go-ahead of the telecom carriers.

Otherwise, the regulator said it would withdraw the issue by coming up with a circular imposing sanctions on such violations, according to NTC Chair Ronald Solis.

"We are mandated to protect the interests of the public, especially the consumers who may be affected if there are arising issues without actual notice. The media networks should not wait for the NTC to step in," Solis said.

There are more than 23 million cellular phone subscribers in the country and about 90 percent are prepaid customers.

The NTC's warning stems 2 weeks after Globe Telecom Inc. complained before the Commission that a promo of ABS-CBN's texting show dragged its crowding system and disrupted its prepaid cellular phone service.

Even before the NTC could act on the complaint, ABS-CBN immediately pulled out the texting-related section from its texting gimmick.

"We already told ABS-CBN that next time, it should consult first with the carriers. What is also affected the service of the carriers is the detriment of the public," Solis said.

Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said Globe Telecom Inc. and Smart Communications Inc. have already agreed to allow the DTI to monitor the texting activities of the two companies.

Secretary Cruz Jr. said the DTI will monitor the texting activities of the two companies to ensure that consumers will not be victimized by unscrupulous texting activities

PLDT offers Smart, gov't bonds for Piltel debts

By Clarissa S. Batino

PLDT also asked creditors to consider swapping the outstanding Piltel debt into a 15-year obligation of its profitable unit Smart Communications Inc.

The dominant carrier met with Piltel creditors late last week to present fresh proposals to restructure the phone company's debts with banks, suppliers and bondholders.

A source described both options to be attractive enough for the creditors to consider although one banker was baffled why Piltel would restructure debt at a time when its finances were gradually turning around. Debt restructuring implied the inability of a company to service its obligations.

During the meeting, last week, PLDT proposed to settle the obligations with the equivalent amount of 15-year $226 Republic of the Philippines' BOBs as dollar-denominated sovereign bonds guaranteed by the national government.

The 15-year BOBs, according to the source, would carry a fixed interest coupon of 2.20 percent a year "for each dollar equivalent of the debt."

The option to convert the Piltel debt into Smart obligations would carry an interest of 2.5 percent a year "with the interest payable semi-annually," according to a source.

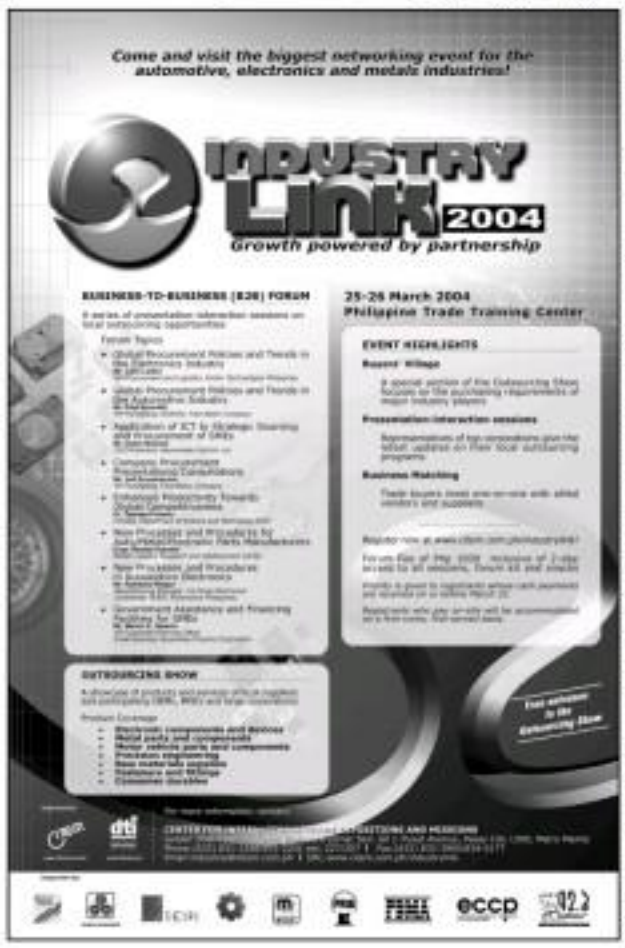
The listing subsidiary of PLDT defaulted on its debt payments in 1999 and declared a moratorium on P41.1 billion of obligations.

Of the total amount, a third or roughly P13 billion is due in more than 20 banks. About $200 million is owed to Sherabest, which rolled out 400,000 landlines for Piltel in Mindanao but did not get paid. The remaining amount is owed to bond holders.

On June 4, 2003, Piltel restructured about 98 percent of its liabilities.

Under the 2003 debt restructuring, half of Piltel's debt was cancelled in exchange for PLDT convertible preferred shares. The balance was restructured into 10-year and 15-year loans secured by Piltel's customer and Au Net assets.

After the 2003 restructuring, Piltel was left with $403 million (P22.5 billion) in debt.



Maynilad offers . . .

(From page B1)

to raise court rates.

"There are discussions between the MWSS and Maynilad, which at the proper time the two parties will reveal when the final agreement is arrived at," Maynilad's legal counsel Ronald A. Lindayan said during a recent court hearing in the Quezon City regional trial court.

Lindayan added that the company would be willing to change its current rehabilitation plan or submit a more acceptable to its creditors.

Uniwide seen offering ₱2B in convertible notes

By Elizabeth L. Sarabia

Uniwide Group of Companies may soon offer convertible notes to settle as much as P2 billion in debts owed to unsecured lenders.

The issuance of these notes is seen to wipe out half of the group's total debt to unsecured creditors or suppliers.

Granted on a request submitted to the SEC by its rehabilitation receiver, Uniwide's unsecured creditors, which might receive the notes would include trade suppliers, contractors, lenders and lease creditors.

Of total unsecured debt as of 2003 issued at P3.18 billion after an account was set aside to settle liabilities through the assignment of property.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) asked the warehouse operator to polish by this week the features of the proposed debt instrument which could be converted into shares of the company.

SEC Chair Lilia Bautista said the commission understood the intention of the proposed 15-year convertible notes to settle debts of the beleaguered company.

She added that the commission has agreed to waive requirement fees on the security since these were settlements to be issued by the company's receiver in behalf of the group.

Once approved by the SEC, the convertible notes may be issued in the next two months.

Uniwide's total P6.34 billion debts after settlement via cash or property swaps, P3.68 billion, were owed to secured creditors like Land Bank of the Philippines, Equitable PCI Bank, Bank of Commerce, Bank of Southeast Asia, Allied Bank, Philippine National Bank, PCI Leasing and Finance, Banco de Oro Universal Bank, PCI Bank and BPI Bank.

BSP eyes deal with banks to facilitate credit data sharing

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is considering forging an agreement with banks on the matter of the latter's access rights to borrower facilities credit data sharing.

In a press briefing on Friday, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that intervening in data gathering and processing was one way the BSP would help in facilitating the establishment of a credit bureau.

That was in view of the banks' reluctance to share pertinent credit information.

To date, the Bankers Association of the Philippines has a data-sharing facility which, however, includes only information on delinquent borrowers. In general, banks are still hesitant to share information on good borrowers with their peers as they fear this will reduce their competitive edge.

"The data could be given to us and then we'll put out feedback on them, and without identifying the lenders, feed over the data to the credit bureau," Buenaventura said.

"My might have to require a waiver so that we could share the data with the credit bureau," the BSP chief said.

He said it was unfortunate that the BSP's charter prevented it from creating a subsidiary which could operate a credit bureau.

The BSP chief said a lot of big loan accounts would not have gone sour in the past if there was a credit bureau that could have made banks more aware of any borrowers' outstanding liabilities. — Beverly C. Pumbles

BSP tightening single borrower's limit rules

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has tightened its rules on single borrower's limits (SBL) as a safeguard against credit concentrations that could lead to bank failures.

The new rules, contained in a circular expected to be issued by the Monetary Board in the next few days, followed the tightening of rules on bank lending to its directors, officers, stockholders and related interest (DOSRI), as well as on exposures to large borrowers.

"SBLs have been strengthened to achieve more comprehensive coverage on a consolidated basis of bank exposures to related parties," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said on Friday during the annual convention of the Chamber of Thrift Banks.

He said the BSP would stop continued to the implementation of its banking reforms "so that new rules that will improve the quality of our banking system."

The General Banking Law currently sets the SBL at 20 percent of the net worth of a bank, that the Monetary Board, under the powers granted to it by the same law, has maintained a higher cap of 25 percent, which is consistent with the current practice.

The basis for determining compliance is the total credit commitment of the bank to the borrower.

"Total credit commitment is defined to include outstanding loans, other credit accommodations, debt-related letters of credit issuance guaranties and guarantees," the blueprint circulated by the BSP to different bankers' association indicated.

Under the new rule, loans, other credit accommodations, deposits and guarantees by a bank to any bank or non-bank entity whether located in the Philippines or abroad will now be subject to SBL.

Bank guarantees now explicitly defined in the new rule as "an irrevocable commitment of a bank binding itself to pay a sum of money in the event of non-performance of a contract by a third party." The guarantee is a commitment separate from the principal debt or contract and will include counter-guaranty and guaranty arrangements.

Apart from expanding the SBL coverage, the ceiling for these guaranties was also increased from 50 percent of the bank's unimpaired capital and surplus to 100 percent of its qualifying capital.

In the meantime, the total amount of loans, credit accommodations and guarantees which may be granted in addition to the 25 percent SBL will be deducted from the net worth of a bank, documents showed.

Other key amendments in the SBL regulations are:

- The liability of an individual and the corporation where he owns a majority interest should be combined and subjected to one SBL.
- The debt-to-bank balances in a private depository bank used to fund checks cleared through the said depository bank shall be exempted from SBL.
- Loans and other credit accommodations covered by assets that transfer are excluded from SBL of a bank or non-bank with quasi-banking (QB) functions. They are, however, added to the transferee if it is a bank or QB covered by SBL regulations.
- Loans and other credit accommodations to the extent specifically provided with valuation reserves are excluded from loan limit.
- Loans and other credit accommodations resulting from underwriting debt securities are exempted from SBL for a period not exceeding 30 days.

The BSP also increased the daily penalty to P1,000 from P500 for the director/officer who approved the credit in violation of the new SBL regulations.

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SSS: Biggest single money loss ever

(Conclusion)

SEN. SERGE Osmeña's public hearings on the proposed sale of the SSS stake in Equitable PCI Bank to Banco de Oro Unibank's standing revelations on a sale issue. The SSS management admitted that P22 billion in overdue low-cost housing loans would have to be written off. This stunned the members of the Philippine Association of Retired Persons (PARP) present in the hearings.

Here is the background of this disaster. At the start of his term, President Ramos launched, with much ballyhoo, his flagship project of building 1,000,000 low-cost homes. But since the government did not have the P200 billion needed for the grandiose plan, Pag-IBIG, the GSIS and the SSS were tapped to put up the money. The SSS provided about P40 billion in all. Most of the money was lost to the National Home Mortgage & Finance Corp., by rebranding. NHMFC was gone bankrupt twice and is about to go under for the third and probably the last time. Negotiations are going on to sell the mortgages. The SSS will be lucky if it can get 15 percent of the overdue loans.

Coming on the heels of a P40-billion drop in assets over the past four years, this P22-billion write-off underscores the catastrophe facing the SSS and its 25 million members.

The bottom story is by no means complete. There is another disaster waiting to blow up. The total of the small salary earner and calamity loans of members now stands at P30 billion. At least P22 billion is not coming and is hopelessly overdue. Unless the borrowers can no longer be traced or the employers have closed down. The SSS is banking on collecting these non-performing loans eventually by applying liens against the check or retirement benefits of the borrowers. Meantime, the cash flow is severely strained.

Finally, there are billions of pesos in potential losses in other investments in equities and real estate. The exact figure is hard to pin down at this time.

The members will never see their money again. Oh, sure, the viability of the SSS is guaranteed by the national government. But with the huge deficit, does anyone really believe the government will ever come to the rescue of the SSS?

The pitiful ones which benefits will be paid has now been shortened. The SSS management has openly admitted the money will

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorato C. Gatbonton

run out by 2013. PARP's study indicates that the system will dry up by 2017, just seven short years away.

In a private company, losses like these would be the personal liabilities of the directors. And the stockholders would probably string up the directors in a public plaza.

To be fair, the current management is not entirely to blame. The members' loans started almost on the day the SSS opened for business over 40 years ago. The low-cost housing time can be laid on the feet of President Ramos. The investment losses were incurred in the depressed Estrada presidency.

But the current management can be faulted for not coming to operating expenses as much as was needed. Incredibly, while members' assets were evaporating, operating expenses were rising. For example, in 2002, assets dropped by P1,725,500,000 from 2001, for the same period, operating expenses were up by P1,281,000,000.

PARP's latest study indicates that the SSS overshot the legal limits for operating expenses for the past four years. If the lawyers think there is a case, PARP will see the SSS management doesn't sleep enough.

Management should now realize that the glory days of uncontrolled spending are over. They need to be reminded that, precisely since the money is not theirs, they should take good care of it. Finally, it is a grievous failure to say that contributions, being compulsory, not the system nothing; benefits are based on the assumption that investments will earn something like 8 percent out.

The members of PARP are worried over the financial catastrophe at the SSS, and so much for rhetoric, but for their grandchildren who are now earning pa-work and are the bread basket of SSS members. For my part, a granddaughter and a grandson are now employed. As other grandson expects to find work soon. What will happen to their SSS money?

So, Sen. Serge Osmeña's crusade is not over. When Congress reopens in July, he will have to settle a new law to reinvent the SSS. And PARP will be right there beside him.

Gov't studies new mining deals with foreign firms

By Ruenel W. Dantingo

THE GOVERNMENT is looking at the possibility of unbundling mining operations to foreign firms to take advantage of rising prices of commodities like metal and nickel, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar O Purisima said.

In a press briefing, Purisima said the Department of Trade and Industry was exploring other ways of attracting money into large-scale mining contracts.

"One possibility is for the government to unbundle mining contracts per mining claim and then subcontract the mining to foreign companies," he said.

This way, legal restrictions on foreign ownership would not be violated. The government would maintain ownership of the mining assets.

"At the same time, development and investment is sub-contracted to a foreign entity since capital and technology—which the government does not have—are required," Purisima added.

In fact, the mining sub-contractor will be allowed to undertake mining activities for a fee. "We could agree on compensation on a cost plus or fair return basis," he said.

"We must do this quickly because prices of prices are currently high and it should be easy to raise capital," the official said.

Purisima said the DTI may work long on the matter with the Chamber of Mines, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the National Economic and Development Authority.

"We will be working within what existing laws allow."

He said the move was being undertaken despite mining restrictions' unconstitutionality following a recent Supreme Court decision.

In January, the high court declared void the provisions of the Mining Act of 1995 related to financial and technical assistance agreements with foreign firms.

The SC ruled that foreign firms can own no more than 40 percent of companies with service contracts to explore for minerals.

"What is needed is clarity on the regulatory environment on mining contracts. We are looking at possible alternatives even if the Supreme Court has not ruled until finality," he said.

Also, Purisima said initial exports were expected to increase next year with the start of the Rapu Rapu mining project in the fourth quarter of 2004.

He said this was made possible with the approval of a $35-mil loan loan to Lafayette Mining Ltd. from a consortium of banks that include SBI Netherhill & Asset Ltd., ANZ investment Bank and ABN-Amro Bank NV.

According to Lafayette, Rapu Rapu Island—located off the Bicol Coast from Albay—will produce copper, gold, silver and zinc valued at $289 million over the initial six year life of the mine.

Feasibility studies of the Rapu Rapu mineral resources indicate that the mine will yield each year 14,000 tons of copper, 14,000 tons of zinc 50,000 ounces of gold and 600,000 ounces of silver.

The mining firm also reported that capital expenditure for the Rapu Rapu are would be less than $41 million, with a guaranteed mine years prior for construction having been negotiated with Leighton Contractors Philippines Inc.

Car insurer shelves IPO

By Doris C. Dumlao

LEADING motorist insurer Standard Insurance has shelved plans for an initial public offering.

The company is to extend grooming to newly acquired subsidiary ofcombined insurance Corp. for listing.

Late last year, Standard Insurance acquired 100 percent of Dutch General Philippines, the local non-life unit of Swiss-based-based Zurich Financial Services Group.

The acquisition is viewed in mind as able to P2.8 billion from P1.95 billion.

The former Zurich firm was renamed ofcombined Insurance and will carry "new" and "non-traditional product lines."

There are expected to be launched by the middle of this year.

Standard Insurance president Ernesto Schurr said "We no longer are a rated for an IPO for Standard Insurance with its high capital and strong financials."

As a result of the acquisition, the company said it has maintained its lead-ership in motor car insurance and strengthened its position in the property insurance market.

"Together with the reinsurance from the Zurich Financial Services Group for the international business under its ownership partnership, Standard Insurance has fully placed last year in reinsurance facilities from international reinsurance companies with high ratings by Standard and Poor's to support the local businesses in property, marine and casualty," the company said.

The continued investment revenue of Standard Insurance and Zurich Gen reached P3 billion.

Standard Insurance ehelked up an 64 percent growth in net income last year to P604 million.

The company recorded a net premium growth of 10 percent to P1.2 billion in 2003 as well as an expansion in its net operating income by 20 percent to P824 million.

Investment and other income likewise rose by 120 percent to P62 million.

The company is entered its quad-up capital to P600 million to December and ended with a stockholders equity at P1.14 billion.

There is one place where

Closed-door 'Open Skies' hearing hit

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE EMPLOYEES union of the Philippine Airlines has faulted the decision of a Manila regional trial court to hold closed-door hearings on the petition of airline workers to nullify and declare as unconstitutional a Malacañang order that liberalized air access of foreign carriers to Subic and Clark.

Salgado Orediza, chair of the union's mobilization committee, said Judge Eduardo Peralta of Manila RTC Branch 27 had barred "non-parties" to the petition from attending the hearing scheduled on March 11 and 16.

"This is a deprivation of the public's constitutional right," Orediza said. "They opened the skies, but closed the hearing."

Last month, the PAL Employees Association, or Palea, together with the National Labor Union and the National Federation of Labor, asked the Manila court to stop the government from implementing Executive Order No. 213. The PAL workers branded the Malacañang order as a "lopsided Open Skies policy."

Unfair

The labor groups also filed a petition for certiorari, questioning the constitutionality of the EO and asking the court to nullify the order.

The EO, signed in December, gave foreign cargo carriers unrestricted access to the Clark Special Economic Zone and the Subic Bay Freeport Zone where the Ninoy Aquino and Subic Bay International airports are located.

Orediza said the EO would result in unfair competition that would kill the local airlines industry.

The US and the Philippines had signed in "open skies" agreement last year, which would allow US carriers to fly more frequently to the Philippines.

Lawmakers, however, said the open skies policy could not be implemented without the approval of Congress.

Shops close

In the petition, Palea said the government's decision to liberalize air access, particularly for US carriers, would not only affect local players like PAL but also the employees.

"It is a known fact that the latest move to general has already been adversely affected by the liberalization efforts of the government," said the labor unions in the petition. "As a result of the so-called free for all market, there are hundreds of industries that have closed shop or have resorted to the slashes or outsourcing of workforce."

The petitioners alleged that the Civil Aeronautics Board has consistently failed to issue rules and regulations to implement EO 213.

The labor groups accused the government of committing "grave abuse" of its authority in allowing foreign players free and unlimited access to the local airports.

all the champions gather.

PSE reclassifies benchmark; to add 6 firms

Bank merges with 3 others in rescue bid

By Doris C. Dumlao

By Elizabeth G. Sanchez

THE TELLTEE Bank Bulletin (PSE) may start out companies to the 30-stock key benchmark composite index after it reclassifies the benchmark using new standards.

Under a preliminary study, companies that may be added to the PSE composite index, in March, are Jollibee Foods Corp., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Banco de Oro Universal Bank, SPI Technologies Inc., Union Bank of the Philippines, property firm Ayala Land Holdings Inc., and Security Bank Corp.

Companies that may be dumped off the blue chip list are DMCI Holdings Inc., Benpres Holdings Corp., Metro Pacific Corp., Meralco Corp., Philippine National Bank and Union Cement Corp.

The PSE board, during a meeting last week, said it has approved the change in the composition of the Dhara, or the basket of the 30 key stocks, to be replaced by mid-cap companies in the weak market.

Under its proposed new composition, the PSE will use the "free-float market capitalization," or the amount of shares that can be traded in the markets, instead of relying on market capitalization which include all outstanding shares or those also held by strategic investors such as directors or officers of a company.

The statistic system falls short of reflecting market performance, the PSE study noted.

International exchanges that use the free-float system are Hong Kong, New York, Canada, Japan, Singapore and Germany. The system is also used by market information providers Morgan Stanley Capital Index and Standard & Poor's.

Aside from the free float available to the public, other criteria to be used are: free float-adjusted market capitalization; liquidity ratio by computing shares traded with equal public shares in free float-adjusted terms; or the number of shares the stock is traded into of all trading days under review; market price, computed with the par value and profitability of the companies.

Stocks with free float of less than 10 percent, liquidity below 5 percent, and firms that report net losses for three consecutive years are dropped from the list.

PSE's preliminary studies showed that a low bond component dominated the stock market quarter (with net and new returns). Out of the 30 index stocks chosen based on the sin criteria cited, the top seven are Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., San Miguel Corp., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Ayala Land Inc., Ayala Corp., Globe Telecom Inc., and SM Prime Holdings Inc. These account for 59 percent of index-market capitalization.

PSE president Guillermo Hidalgo has said the changes in the composition is seen to boost liquidity in the stock market by encouraging listed companies to increase the number of shares available to the public.

The PSE also proposed to conduct a review of the Dhara twice a year—in May and November—to determine changes in the composition.

He also said the move is part of the PSE's immediate goal to liberalize (Encouraged Access) in expanding participation in the local stock market.

Companies also included in the index are Alaska Equity Ventures, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., Ayala Land PCI Bank, Filinvest Land Inc., First Philippine Holdings Corp., Glorietta Inc., San Miguel, International Container Terminal Services Inc., JG Summit Holdings, Jollibee Foods Corp., Manila Electric Co., Megaworld Corp., Shemberg Bank & Trust Co., Petron Corp., Rizal Corp., Digital Telecommunications Phils., Inoza Inc., and Lepanto Consolidated Mining.

DOTC bares billions in revenue loss on road ads

By Clarissa S. Ibalos

THE GOVERNMENT has not given accountability of advertising billboards and subway developments put up along the metro-owned north and south expressways, according to the Department of Transportation and Communication.

Transportation Undersecretary Arturo Valdez said that the department has already submitted a resolution to identify the members of the group that benefited from the alleged illicit arrangement among the advertisers, subway developers and officials of the state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp.

"The government has not received a centavo from these advertisements and subway facilities," said Valdez, who is also a director of the Subway Regulatory Board, the quasi-judicial agency tasked to regulate the operations of the PNCC and other subway developers. "I would not say exactly how much, but the revenues from rental of these facilities run up to billions in pesos a year."

A chief witness here for a separate case filed by Valdez, according to Valdez. There are hundreds of these billboards and subways, including the recent clearing operation in Southern Luzon.

The lease agreement, according to one of the advertisers, is signed by PNCC officials.

"The TOR had not done anything through the years," according to Valdez. "It had allowed these unauthorized arrangements to flourish. The PNCC, based on the agreement signed with San Miguel, is not authorized to collect payments for subway development."

He said the government should also have gotten revenues from areas made given to subdivisions and other developments from the expressway. So far, Valdez said, the agency has reported earnings.

Had the government shared in the profits from the ads and developments, Valdez said it could have used the revenues to subsidize the rising subway fares, particularly in the North Luzon Expressway.

By the fourth quarter, the subway fare in the north would go up by 179 percent, once the Lopez-controlled Manila North Tollways Corp. takes over the PNCC operation of the 83.7-kilometer Highway.

Valdez said the government is powerless to prevent the subway hike.

For the current 2926 toll by the end of the Skyway, Valdez said, motorists will pay P129 for a single journey while buses and truck drivers would each have to shell out P300 and P600 starting October.

If the government were receiving revenues from operations, Valdez said, "then it could continue the subway increase," said Valdez.

While toll fees have to be approved by the TOR, the Supplemental Toll Operation Agreement (Toa) between the Manila North Tollways Corp. and the PNCC in 1990 would supersede the powers of the TOR, according to Valdez.

Manila North Tollways Corp. or MNTC is about to complete the P10 billion expansion and modernization of the North Luzon Expressway.

The company is 76 percent owned by the Lopez Group. The state-run Philippine National Construction Corp., which has the sole franchise to operate the north and south expressways, also has a stake in the Manila North Tollways Corp.

Investments in ecozones mark upturn

By Rowena M. Domingo

INVESTMENTS in economic zones in the first nine months of 2004 indicate the start of an upturn in business, according to the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

Gilardo de Lima, PEZA director general, told a gathering of investors last week that a commitment by Peoples Republic of China to invest in January-February and the first week of March "reveals that 2004 is going to be a very exciting year."

De Lima said total investments in the first nine months reached P14.94 billion, an increase of about 60.4 percent, from P1.12 billion for the same period of 2003.

"These investments already translate to 32.63 percent of the total 2003 investments in PEZA which amount to P20.4 billion," the official said.

She said that as of end-2003, there were 100 economic zones. Of this number, 91 ecozones were hosting over 1,000 locators or companies.

"Included in the 91 ecozones are 16 information technology parks and buildings located in Metro Manila, Cebu and Mactan, which serve as hosts to 82 locators engaged IT-enabled services," De Lima added.

Also, Peza signed last week a memorandum of agreement with the Energy Regulatory Commission to make easier the regulatory processes on electricity-related activities.

In an interview, ERC chair Rodolfo B. Albano Jr. clarified that the regulator was not exclusively dealing with Peza but that it was in effect "dispensing" the Peza.

"The ERC is giving Peza the authority to register power generation and distribution utilities companies and applications for rates and related policies," Albano explained. "But all the decisions will still be administered by the ERC."

Before the agreement, processing is done in the ERC headquarters in Pasig City, Albano said. "That is quite cumbersome for the investor to come (which is mostly in the provinces)."

Smart all set for 16 million subscribers

By Clarissa S. Ibalos

THE WIRELESS mobile network of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. will soon be able to handle over 16 million subscribers by the end of next month, according to company president Napoleon Nazareno.

As of February, subscribers of Smart Communications Inc. and PLDT's Talk 'N Text have already reached more than 13 million. By yearend, the PLDT subsidiaries expect subscriber base to hit 16 million.

"We can handle 16 million total customers in a day and, roughly, we will be having more network capacity ahead. (Despite) the cancellations," the president said in a recent interview.

In 2003, Smart already accounted for 45 percent of the market, while Talk 'N Text kept its 13 percent share.

Both carriers added more to 1.5 million subscribers in the fourth quarter alone, surpassing the previous quarter's record when it added 1.2 million new mobile phone customers.

PLDT chief Manuel Pangilinan said last month that total subscribers could hit 14 million by the end of the first quarter.

Smart has asked the National Telecommunications Commission for additional access codes in anticipation of its growing number of subscribers.

Smart has extended its nationwide coverage to 1,000 cities and municipalities, covering 80 percent of the total population through its network of 11 switches and 1,904 base stations.

Its current capacity has been expanded to accommodate 14.1 million subscribers as of end-2003.

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Cecile Licad set to enthrall Manila again /C2

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CHRIST (Jim Caviezel) is betrayed in Gethsemane (below) at the Last Supper

Shock cinema of faith and gore

'Passion' is bloody and brutal in the extreme. But it's also a deeply powerful, admirably directed film

By Gilda Cadiz

BY NOW, you've probably read what many mainline critics have had to say about Mel Gibson's "The Passion of The Christ."

"One of the cruelest movies in the history of cinema," pronounced the New Yorker's David Denby. "Stomach-turning and deeply troubling," said Jeff Jacoby of the Boston Globe. Lou Carlozo of the Chicago Tribune called it "easily the most violent, blood-drenched film I have seen in years," while Newsweek's David Ansen thought it played like "the Gospel according to the Marquis de Sade." Richard Corliss of Time had the best quip: Gibson, he said, has invented a new genre—"the exploitation-epic-art film."

Yes, "Passion" is gory, graphic and brutal in the extreme. Teachers, Sunday school leaders and parents who might think the movie is a good tool to instill religion in their kids should take that as a warning.

"Passion" is not for children. It is an all-too-serious religious film made for adult sensibilities and best left for adults to watch. Its unrelenting scenes of violence and sadism, even within the context of the Christian story of sin and redemption, may profoundly scar young minds.

Deeply powerful

But Christ's excruciating-filled "Passion" is also a deeply powerful, admirably directed re-imagining of a story we all know too well but hardly consider important beyond the grandly noble, well-combed versions Hollywood has fed us all these years.

This is not "King of Kings" or "The Greatest Story Ever Told." Gibson's "Passion" does not move you with robotic stock, overstylized close-ups, majestic photography and stilted dialogue that's equally pain-inducing. Gospel quotes and hokey line recitations by a multitude of pious Hollywood actors are out.

This is not "Swan of Brunswick," editor Zeffirelli's anemic continuation of how the most popular, most-replayed version, and to a large extent that tends to color most film managed to cobble together the relevant and epic sweep of the Gospel narratives into a gripping movie, with a hypnotic mutual performance by Jesus himself.

"Passion," basically over a large part of its runtime, is an unlikely mix...given the cold, almost contrived, cinematic tableaux of this film...perhaps...more so its acclaimed, edged source: Nikos Kazantzakis' "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Filmed and condemned in Hollywood when it was released in 1988, Scorsese's un-

(article, c2)

Licad Fresh from Paris debut, set to enthrall Manila again

She will play with the San Miguel orchestra on March 23 and perform a benefit at CCP on April 2

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

FILIPINO pianist Lisa Licad will be heard as soloist in Ravel's *concerto in G* in a concert with the San Miguel Philharmonic, under the baton of honorary PPO music director Eugene Castillo, on March 23 at the Tuason Otis, Avala Triangle in Makati City.

The musical event is the 175th anniversary of Ayala Corporation. It also features Boris Gutchieff with the San Miguel Philharmonic.

Both Castillo and Licad had awakened with the National Symphony in Washington D.C. (he as assistant and she as soloist under Rostropovich), garnering more than positive reviews from the Washington Post. Licad has also worked with Castillo's mentor, JoAnn Poimo, who used to teach at the Long Beach Symphony.

When I first saw the initial performances of Castillo at the CCP Tanghalang Pilipino and later on at an outreach concert of the PPO, my first impression was that Castillo had compelling presence and musical authority that belied his young age. He lacks flash inasmuch as he has style and a style that kept every measure of music alive.

Meanwhile, the most recent of the month is that Licad had her debut as recitalist in Paris the other Saturday when her close friend Cecile Licad will be heard as soloist in Ravel's *concerto in G* with the San Miguel Philharmonic under

Shock cinema . . .

From page C1

ions presented an all too human Christ, tortured by doubts, weakened by the burdens of his bloody mission, tempted into lust, envy by the devil as he hung, about to breathe his last, on the cross.

The images become presented were stark, grim, unpretty, mirroring the desolate Galilean landscape of hope and doom where Christ and his disciples labored to sow the seeds of a revolutionary new faith.

But the only thing many people recall of "The Last Temptation of Christ" is the violent controversy over a love-making scene between Christ and Mary Magdalene—a scene one might add, that lasted for about two seconds, was shot in a thoughtful manner, and was clearly a fundamental, part of the sublet, quiet rhythms of family life that was the ultimate temptation Christ rejected before finally accepting his cross.

Gibson's film, focusing as it does on the last 12 hours of Christ's life, beginning from his arrest at Gethsemane to his death at Golgotha, lacks the theological and spiritual sustenance of Scorsese's film.

In fact, it lacks any reflective moorings whatsoever. Its message is raw-raw simple: Christ suffered for us, in the most gruesome way possible, so save us from sin. (Here's how he suffered, be grateful for it.

Human weakness

But what Gibson owes Scorsese is the idea of temptation and human weakness as relentlessly dogging Christ all the way, gnawing at his birth, reducing him to a being in flesh similar to us in the manner of greatest frailty.

He shows the devil, played by Rosalinda Celentano as an androgynously beautiful fallen angel, at every step of Christ's journey to the cross, enticing, cooing to him in his most excruciating moments to abandon the mission and come to a very godhead instead.

Obviously, the Gospels say nothing about these last-hour temptations. But dramatically, they provide a logical weight to Christ's ultimate acceptance of his redemptive work. It deepens his sacrifice, invests it with greater heroism and meaning. Gibson's error, wagging of these added refinements as entirely useful and believable.

Likewise, with "Last Temptation" and now "Passion," Hollywood movies, at last, seem to have retired the image of Christ as an aristocratic comic of strength and infinite dignity, the way Ben Hur Ayshur, Jeffrey Hunter and Oswall played him.

Here we have a Christ who sweats, stumbles, weeps and growls, who looks dirty, disheveled, at times bewildered. Then he overcomes all his human limitations and utters words to divine calling to the end makes him a more accessible Messiah.

In "Passion," Jim Caviezel's Christ is palpably human—still noble, yes, but also weary, attractive, easygoing, and, in his agony in the garden, heartbreakingly vulnerable. One is tempted to think that Gibson has created a Christ just unlike his own self-image: virile, robust, cheerful, physically energetic.

One of the film's loveliest moments shows Jesus hamming and leering around with his mother. It's a brief scene, but the sight of Christ smiling and spraying water on a bemused Mary is a welcome antidote to the severe, usually formal image we've grown up with. This Christ...a carpenter by trade, has a ripped physique and an easy presence. He doesn't owe us, he engages us.

Existentialisms

Gibson, that most physical of artists, has built a career out of stretching characters to be basic existentialisms of primal human urges: anger ("Mad Max"), revenge ("Braveheart" and "The Patriot"), guilt and doubt ("Thunder"), seclusion ("Lethal Weapon"), alienation ("The Man Without A Face").

In "Passion," he finds a visual equivalent for much of the drama by physicalizing the characters' thoughts and feelings.

Judas sees the devil in tangible form, making him, the terrible fear of what's to come, expressed in his anguished prayer at Gethsemane, takes shape in the form of a snake. And when he steels himself to accept his fate, he crushes the reptile under his foot.

Judas, too, somewhat yet tormented by the horror of his crime, sees his guilt in physical form...in the demon-like faces of children taunting him out of the gates of Jerusalem, in the rattling carcass of a dead beast, in a thousand Dke creatures emerging from the deadness as he slinks away.

This mindset may help explain the film's major weakness: its tunnel-vision approach to the story of Christian redemption.

Gibson's decision to frame his film on Christ's torture and death leaves out much of the resonance of the life-affirming teachings.

You get them in snatches—Jesus glimpses the hill of his crucifixion, and his mind flashes back to the Sermon on the Mount, which, apparently in Gibson's version, was held on the same place; between a blood-drenched eyelash, he glimpses the face of a Roman soldier, and the scene cuts back to the night he washed the feet of his disciples as a demonstration of love and humility.

What you get, then, is Christianity lite, perhaps it's an attempt at distilling the essence of the faith, by highlighting the most important teachings amid the real bloody landscape of Christ's suffering. But the sheer enormity of the violence washes everything out.

Operatic

The violence of "Passion" is bleak, sweeping and operatic in its intensity. Gibson positions his camera right next to Christ's rib just as a Roman soldier's sword ripped today-savage and lurches itself into the flesh. There it's pulled away, and flesh, bone, cobbles and mud are torn away.

Clearly, Christ's pain and agony are the linchpins of Gibson's fevered religious beliefs. You can sense it in the way he masterfolishes these scenes, with slow-motion camera work, extreme close-ups and heartrending sounds of the cracking and skin being ripped apart.

After a while, the avalanche of punches, blows, kicks, jabs and scourgings becomes numbing. One can only take so much of this extreme bloodbath. Certainly, if Gibson's intention is to inspire faith in his audience, he's leaving us just as bludgeoned as guilty.

To viewers adult enough to withstand it, "Passion" is thus both an exhilarating and schizoid ordeal. More than a movie, it's an experience that will stay with you for a long time.

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Secret lives behind the bylines

By Sylvia Mayuga
Correspondent

"ALREFLEXO in Manila" (Hillbrow Publishing Inc.) is an elegant contribution to the age of specialty books, with 30 contributing memoirists striking the reader in frantic quality, ironic and lyric just about people's bedtimes. Mostly essays, a smattering of poems and short fic-tion borrowed from the Filipino literary community. In scrupulously unanimous editor Carolina Hidalgo, this book offers thinly veiled confessions on what exactly one does in the hours when most everyone has fallen asleep.

The book's thesis runs to philosophy: "Insomnia has afforded me a kind of immortality... Indeed, an immortality of many kinds. There is that sense of forever that resonates in music that poetry readers, or that a good story will tell you. There is, perhaps, the illusion that you're making life longer merely by staying awake through another night. Certainly there is the deferred death sentence indefinitely rubbished..." writes Sergi Lorenzo in "Night Lives."

Vicente Garcia Sayson's "Good Morning" would be its companion piece—an hour spent

REVIEW

ing Over this city in a hay stand or-ornamental line to cosmic rhythm, guiding him with strange nonsense-dens of a certain time of month. "Electricity has a way of keeping us preoccupied, giving us excuses for continuing our ordinary past the time Nature intended... Take electricity away and it becomes perfectly clear—it's the moon... when the full moon does, it seems to grab the water silently in the ocean seems to creep up on you... Walking barefoot on the sand, on stickabilities on if I could find the point where the island's rock sands begin, to mold with the ocean floor, reminded me that I am of a part with the earth, and let me see how the rhythm of my body does, in fact, harmonize with what Carl Sagan called the cosmic Pulse."

Not all anniversary accept their fate so serenely however. The serious business of owning shop becomes increasingly desperate as the new house every into messenger when everyone really must rejoin the diurnal world. Desperately seeking sleep, Clarissa Rikara is dismantles and choose an antique clock. Frank Cesario launches into a hypnotic retreat of sensitive. Ana Alcantara explains a classic New York Knicks game; Ray Yanez plays mental bouts of basketball to forward, captain ball, audiences, video cameramen, even as a goaling popcorn vendor. Emil Flores reviews his collection of marital arts movies. April Taylor Tan declares all-out war on cockroaches. Luis Kenghat fantasizes a midnight magnitude of the cranial. BM Bolarcas has in Dr. old boxer into ordinary masterpiece. Rosina Gonzalez imagines in detail how she would spend would-be windfall of $100 M. Bingbee amid the sounds of another drama over Faraway, Jenny Evangelista plans "a quick server of life as I know it, including major doses of Literature and Philosophy and the issues of wine and peace..."

There's more than literature in this entertaining book in bits and pieces of helpful fact and old wives' remedies for insomnia (number for sentences, 900); interesting illustrations, "Sleepless in Manila" collects fascinating behind beings with glimpses into their secret lives behind the bylines.

Haikus of storytelling

"Fast Food Fiction: Short Stories to Go" (179 pp., Anvil Publishing), edited by Roselle Q. de Leon, introduces the local audience to a novel trend called "sudden" fiction—short short stories no more than a few pages long. Editor and National Dr. Jesus discovered sudden fiction in an anthology of American writers including Esther Nibley, Joyce Carol Oates and John Updike. There came a global collection by writers like Yasunari Kawabata, Colline, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar and Antonio Tabucchi (and his other short fiction literary legends).

In the progressively quickened pace and split-second style of modern life, "sudden fiction" was said apologized by an even shorter form—500 words or less—variously called "flash fiction," "postcard story" and "fast food fiction," with all the elements of the short story preserved like a Chinese landscape in a matchbox.

This requires "precision not unlike what's called for when artisans design jewelry or when engineers construct a microchip," notes Noelle in her introduction, challenging "delicacy, a controlled hand and sharp perception for precision of the right detail." Indeed, the requisite "Minimalist"—her (previously published story of 400 words—gives a relief room of "words (that) can matter a moment, drive one a day, and remember a lifetime."

Reflection promise to however unevenly fulfilled in fifteen selections of 300 to 900 plus words, several of them marred by hackneyed or contrived plots, which squander a tight budget of words for shallow effect, a bit like crossing battered popcorn box on matrimonial odor. Either there is not enough local "fast food fiction" around or the editor's literary appetites or motifs of writing (not ruled in the over-chroniclers by literary judgment than by the rag of their well-known authors' names).

That said, "Fast Food Fiction" has a high hitting average, most of its stories proving the potential of the haiku of storytelling—novel pieces, slices of life ranging the reader from surrealistic, autobiographical stories that tug at the heart, a few to disappoint the reader with a cursory reading, one elements of a re-guess on a single-line punch line that ends with a crazy look of the head. Well worth the reader's time, the book is also a tempting invitation to try one's hand at a elegant new literary form, if only as relief from the quivering melodrama of most media storytelling.

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'Fast Food Fiction' offers a novel trend—short short stories of 500 words or less

Poetry books from National Artist Rio Alma

ANVIL Publishing is pleased to announce the upcoming launch of two literary collections of poetry by students by National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario, "Sari-Sari" and "Ang Huwag na Ito?" The launch will be held on March 19, in the Atrium of the New Cal Building in UP Diliman, where he is the dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

Almario, known under his pseudonym Rio Alma, is the author or editor of countless books on language, literary criticism and Philippine children's books. He has won the National Book Award four the mostly Carlos Palanca, Balagtas for his poetry and essays, and was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Philippine Board on Books for Young People.

Both collections will soon be available on all National Book Store and Power Books branches. Call 749-1622.

LIFESTYLE

THE REAL monument in Magsaysay. Note the oversized sun glows.

Rizal, Rizal everywhere! But are Filipinos any better at history?

RIZAL in Cuba, with me and my sister Monica

Re-viewing Rizal

YOU learn something new every day. We were traveling through Laguna with some friends. Our tour guide, Ina Manalo, pointed out a statue of Jose Rizal that was in the town square. Ina mentioned how there were similar statues in the plazas of practically every town in the Philippines.

I was amazed. I had always seen these statues around but it never occurred to me that they were so numerous!

ALL4ART

Nino Jobet Jr.

Ina went on to say that a young scholar he knew, Robert Pesayo, was studying Rizal statues across the nation. Since many of these pieces were made by local sculptors, they provided interesting insights into how local artists were interpreting the entire theme.

We all found it fascinating that a young scholar would spend time to carry out such a study. It embarrasses me to admit that, at one point, someone in the group asked if Robert Pesayo was single — but that is another story.

Speaking of local variations, the statue in the town of Magsaysay, Laguna, that Ina pointed out was a good example. It was surrounded by elaborate (and rather dramatic!) elements which included lamp posts, emblems and statues. The statues were symbols for such things as industry and progress. Clearly the message being projected was that we should all strive to be industrious and progressive like Rizal.

The monument was made during the American Colonial period when it was very much part of national policy to promote industrial production. Other symbols of this emphasis on industrialization appeared in the works of the same period. Remember the statue with the woman and the carrel or the man with the wheel of progress?

In the neighboring town of Magdalena, we saw a Rizal statue embraced by a woman in a hero's pose. It was almost as if Jose Rizal himself was consoling Rizal for the great sacrifice of having drawn his life. I could so clearly in the town of Calamba, the Rizal monument had the hero wearing what looked like a barong.

Speaking of barongs, we fell in discussing why Rizal was often depicted in an oversized. Other writers have commented about how much the hero looked standing under the tropical sun in his overcoat. I can't help thinking that we Filipinos relate to this image of Rizal in winter clothes because somehow it reminds us that he went abroad. I suppose Filipinos value the ability to study abroad, live abroad, love abroad and generally travel abroad. Rizal in his overcoat might be seen as a comforting symbol for the many Filipinos learned to seek a better life overseas.

Rizal in Cuba

Actually, in one of my foreign trips, I was surprised to come across an image of Rizal. This was during my visit to Cuba. I was passing a long gallery lined with statues when I suddenly spotted a strangely familiar figure. Looking at it closely I exclaimed, "Hey, it's Jose Rizal!" I couldn't believe it.

It was wonderful to see our dear Rizal in Cuba. It was like bumping into a childhood friend! I felt so proud to see him there. My Cuban guide was delighted. I was told that they had long wondered who the statue actually represented. I was happy to enlighten them. Of course, one wonders what the bust of Rizal was doing in a building in Havana. The only connection that my friends could dimly remember was that Rizal was about to take a trip to Cuba when he was arrested by the Spanish authorities. Surely the statue could not have been made to commemorate an aborted trip!

I am told that the earliest known public monument ever erected for Rizal is in Dare, Comunes State. The local citizens honored

(CONTINUED ON C2)

"LILY Pond"

The comfort of the familiar and the sense of harmony and proportion induce serenity in the viewer's soul

The beauty of conservative art

RICKY Montilla with a "Sanggumay" painting

By Constantino C. Tejero

THERE was a time when Impressionism could cause riots; but that was over a century ago. Now one would hardly consider it revolutionary, as even Filipino artists have appropriated the style and technique. In short, it has become commonplace art.

In this age of fin-con digital art and outrageous installations, conservative art still has an important function. It may no longer stimulate the mind or galvanize the spirit, but it satisfies the conscious viewer's age-old sense of beauty. It's a function that's quite important.

You don't expect to find any antique sentiment in a cell like of alcohol and hayseed, or a hint of globalization in the travelogue of ducks and water lilies on a pond. But there's always that comfort of the familiar and the sweet of harmony and proportion which induce serenity in the viewer's soul.

This is the principle that informs the art of Ricky Montilla, an artist who still insists on working in the traditions of Raymundo Amorsolo. "But it all ranging to his debut last November," he adds.

But Amorsolo is only one on his roster of favorites, which includes Gaus, Fidel Ja, Impact, Israelis, Monet, Tom Roberts, Hernando Jaen, Legaspi, Botong Francisco, Galicano, Jerry Montoya.

Imbibing the styles and techniques of these artists, he creates art that is described as "a fusion of realism and impressionism." That is, the composition, details and arrangement of objects are realistic, while the interplay of light and shadow color leans more than quite impressionistic, producing images that sometimes approach luminism.

Extent of influence

One can appreciate the extent of these influences in "Montilla's Impressions," 18 pieces on oil on canvas, with 18 backdrop of brookdown; another piece, until March 24 in Gallery 139 at the Ateneo Art Gallery, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is "Sanggumay" series, depicting the storied Bundukan countess, then an great shopping by pinkish blossom like weeping willow.

The pieces are notable for their scale and visual appeal. To create volume for the vegetable petals, the artist uses a blend of rose madder, white, permanent rose and yellow oxide sprinkled with cobalt purple for distressing the color, he explains.

Also is also partial to green, blue-violet and gray for neutralize other colors). A favorite hue is Indian yellow (blend of gold and yellow), which he uses as highlight or accent, as in the center of his series Moonrise.

The landscapes are of ponds and marshes where children, ducks and sheep frolic—reminiscent of the Manet scientific pond and the Amorsolo pastoral.

Doesn't the artist find this retrogressive, that he should produce images in a style more than 100 years old, without even painting a spin or 4? Why does he persist in painting such things?

"Para namaan lang ako," Montilla humbly says. "Hindi ko naman nagagawa ang mga yun[illegible] kasi ako mismo ayaw. Ang hirap kasi ng ganyan[illegible] sa mga yun...[illegible] dapat na yun, e. But you know we tell them in order to buy mas mas[illegible] to produce more paintings and explain your art more."

Simple aesthetics

The simplicity of his aesthetics is just reflective of the simplicity of his thoughts about art.

"Figurative ako ..." he continues. "Sa ang pinto ng buyer. But there flowers are just a accompaniment for my favorite subject[illegible] of art in the future, at child. Inspired also sa Japanese[illegible] ang sanggumay maaliwalas pasok 'yun, walang gumagawa niyan. Regarded[illegible] mahirap[illegible] pero[illegible] ko na. Pi'yan ako mahirap[illegible]."

But he also does abstractions, as inspired from figuration, and has collected seven of pieces though he has not exhibited them yet.

"Pag tumatanda ka na sa pinagpaguran, gusto mo lesser-[illegible]," he explains. "Gusto ko'ng more brilliancy, malapad ang pahid ng pintura. Ayaw ko ng photographic art."

Montilla took up Fine Arts, major in Painting, at the University of Santo Tomas. In the late 1970s, at 18, he was the youngest to a group of artists who boycotted then Cojuangco rule in Malate, Manila Oro.

There he was taken by his aunt, art connoisseur and writer Lutgi Montilla, to meet luminaries such as Manansala. After the Martes commented he found some potential in him, "inaglaseen ako ng napakaraming[illegible] ko noon."

And that was when he decided to go on with his art, and has never stopped since, guided only by his sense of harmony.

NEW AAP OFFICERS
Sculptor Ramon Orlina, former president of the Art Association of the Philippines, recently inducted the new set of AAP officers led by its president, Rolet Santeramo, at Kamayan ng Taling in Rizal Park. Seated: Raul Isidro, former AAP president; Santeramo; Ana Chanco Bistoyong of Philippine Women's University board secretary; Marieloe Arandilla, PRO; Orlina; and Angel Cuenca of the Kanlay Group. Standing: Avic Bajeta, VP-external; Bal Arregayan, secretary; Raul Casaysay, board; Bob Carrascoso, VP-internal; Fred Ramirez, treasurer; Dave de la Cruz, board; Vic Garcia, board; and professor Danny Santiago of the UST College of Fine Arts and Design, auditor.

"BUHAY" by Dominic Rubio

KOMUNITIC 4 AT CRUCIBLE
DOMINIC Rubio, Reynel Rey Alcuda, Edwin Tres Reyes and Jerry Pacudan of the Komunitic Group of Artists will have a special three-starring immersion at the Crucible Gallery (Artwork, 41, SM Megamall) until the 28th. "Worlds of Color" combines 15 recent works of the four artists, all close friends. Rubio, Tres Reyes and Alcuda graduated at the University of Santo Tomas' College of Fine Arts and Design. Rubio, Alcuda and Irene Pante, Laguna, Rubio is a well known artist. He Filipinizes and often motifs. Alcuda is known for his moody figures. Alcuda, a winner of the Hiraya Award, is known for his colorful stamp. Tres Reyes' figures are evocative.

"PAGSISI" by Edwin Tres Reyes

"PAGSISI and Patayuan II," by Reynel Rey Alcuda

Impy Pilapil goes outdoors

IMPY Pilapil manages to reach out to people who have been alienated by art's hubris in "Benevolent Force," which opened on March 11 and is curated by Valerie Pascilan.

The exhibit was held on the open lawns of Greenbelt 3 and 4 and in the park in front of Ebanista 4 facing Hotel Intercontinental.

Pilapil thinks the world has, upon on reason or an ideal setting for his sculptures to shine, glow and transform a stark, urban upturn into abstract, dark planes on the ground but also vastly earth-friendly, public, emotional and mystical.

"I want people—office workers, ordinary working people, passersby—to come and touch and feel my work," she says. "If it pokes them, if it affects them and they feel a relationship with it, to me that's the most important thing."

"I'd like to break the elitist image of art exhibitions," the artist adds. "I'd like people to feel they, also belong in art exhibitions, that the works on exhibit can also speak to them and emotionally connect to them."

IMPY Pilapil's "Legend"

"Benevolent Force" continues Pilapil's quest for the lyrical still. The works include her explorations of the sacred and the metaphoric power of water, stone and wood.

Art critic Ma Hontiveros called the works her "hope of faith in the unknown and unknowable."

RAMON Ng, Bank president and CEO, flanked by (left) Dr. Ruth Bel-Lim Apuyan, PWWPF president, and Eggie Apuzen, PWWPF board chair

DIWA education revolutionaries hand out school supplies and bags to Manaoag pupils beside a makeshift classroom.

Chito Madrigal-Collantes, Vivian Que-Azcona grace UST awards ceremony

BUSINESS magnates and philanthropists Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal-Collantes and Vivian Que Azcona are the guests of honor when the University of Santo Tomas holds its annual Student Awards today.

Que Azcona, president and general manager of Mercury Drug Corp., will deliver the trade normal inspirational address to 6,000 graduates of the UST Faculty of Pharmacy, she has steered Mercury, which has 500 stores and 7,000 employees to consistently to total dominance and public service.

Meanwhile, Madrigal-Collantes, a summa cum laude graduate of the UST College of Commerce, will give out the Quezon Leadership Awards. The panel awarding and head of the prestigious Madrigal business clan is a member of the Santo Tomas Charity Foundation.

CHITO Madrigal-Collantes

UST Rector Fr. Timoteo Lena, OP will give out the Rector's Award for academic excellence, Pope Leo XIII Award for extensive development, Benavides Outstanding Achievement Award, St. Dominic de Guzman Award for teamwork and St. Thomas Aquinas Award.

Adopt-a-School pioneer joins Education Revolution

By Bacch Hernandez
Contributor

THE FINANCIAL world knows Ramon Y. Sy as a seasoned, top caliber bank executive. Sy, a Cavitenio is every sense of the word, is the president and chief executive officer of the International Exchange Bank.

Recently, Dr. Ruchie Lim Antonio and Eggie Apuzen, president and chief of the board, respectively, of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWWPF), and this writer called on Sy to talk about involving IBank in the Education Revolution.

In the pleasant surprise, they learned that Sy pioneered the adopt-a-school concept in the 80s when he was at the helm of another bank. He said back then, he incorporated the adopt-a-school scheme into his bank's corporate social responsibility program. They were able to help 20 or so public schools in a continuing basis, Sy said. Even then, he already believed that education was the best weapon against poverty.

Sy still feels the same way even now that he's with IBank. Hence, the birth of the FWWPF. IBank is preparing a pilot school adoption project that will hopefully grow into a full-blown corporate social responsibility program. With Sy's pioneering experience in adopt-a-school, success is assured.

Ayte school adopted

The Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (Oisca), led by its director, Shigeru Watanabe, has joined the Education Revolution by adopting the Mamanu Primary and Elementary School in Nueva Ecija recently.

Mary Manuntag pupils are Aytas.

Oisca volunteers distributed recently school supplies and bags to Mamanu pupils and organized a joint community school revitalization project.

Oisca will expand its school adoption efforts in the coming months to reach more public schools and gather more volunteers.

STUDENT volunteers from the AMF College of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Medical Professions attach the nameplate of a pupil from the Dr. Clemente Bautt Elementary School.

Volunteers shun gimmicks

College students of De Angelo University Foundation (AUF) have been spending their free time by being involved in the Education Revolution instead of going to gimmicks.

The students—from the College of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Medical Professions—visit regularly the Dr. Clemente Bautt Elementary School (Dobo) to conduct eye checkups and talk about good hygiene with the pupils.

Meanwhile, another group from the College of Computer Studies helps public school teachers improve their computer literacy at the newly installed Center for Computer Literacy also at the Dobo.

Dr. Rose Marie Constantino of the AUF Office for Community Extension Services (Oces) said that Dobo was just one of three elementary schools that the AUF adopted in 2004. The others are Dinalao and Salapungan Elementary Schools.

The Oces organizes community groups and student volunteers to implement the different components of the school adoption program.

Aside from the health checkups and computer literacy projects, Dr. Constantino said other student volunteers and their professors regularly conduct language proficiency seminars for teachers in their adopted public schools. Community volunteers had been encouraged to start botanical gardens in the schools and refurbish old or build new playground equipment.

Constantino also said they intended to launch a school feeding program soon.

The author is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power

Letran-Calamba marks 25th year

THE COLEGIO de San Juan de Letran in Calamba, Laguna recently marked its 25th founding anniversary.

Dubbed "Archangel 25 Years of Growing Hearts and Minds," the celebration started last March 8 with a fun, multi-sectoral, sports and entertainment involving students, faculty, employees, alumni and supporters. Leading the celebration was Letran-Calamba's chancellor, the Rev. Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, OP.

Since its establishment by the Philippine Dominican Province in 1997, Letran-Calamba has become one of the leading educational institutions in Southern Luzon. Its science-oriented and English-based elementary and high schools have become models in the region. Its undergraduate (arts and sciences, education, commerce, accountancy and engineering) and graduate programs (Ph.D. Management, MBA, MEd, Management Engineering, Environment Management and Educational Management) have made Letran the foremost higher education institution in the Integrated Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) area.

Letran-Calamba will announce in the coming school year a BS Nursing program, which is affiliated with the College of Nursing of the University of Santo Tomas.

Gabriel Formoso foundation established

BOBBY Formoso and Melinda Formoso-Quintana, heirs of renowned Filipino architect Gabriel P. Formoso, along with an impressive roster of business leaders and professionals, have set up the Gabriel P. Formoso Foundation Inc., a non-stock, nonprofit organization approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Social Services and Aris. (1).

The foundation's primordial is scholarship fund for poor students and is currently undertaking the publication of a coffee table book about the life and times of this maverick servant of "the Father of all the Arts." The book, "Gabriel Formoso—The Man, His Works and His Legacy" will cover an encyclopaedic, if not illuminating, handbook for all practicing architects, architecture majors and scholars of design.

The foundation's board of directors include Bienvenido M. Quisumbing, architect Ricardo M. de la Rosa, engineer David M. Consunji, Magtanggol A. Zamora, Jaime I. Ayala, lawyer Manuel J. Concepcion, Rogelio Villarama, Ma. Belinda P. Quinsaat and Roberto A. Formoso. The foundation's outstanding board of directors have all played significant roles in Formoso's brilliant career.

Quisumbing's residence and other infrastructures were designed by architect Formoso.

Villarama designed the Tobacco Towers and was Formoso's first associate.

De la Rosa first trained under Formoso and is now the managing partner of DP and Partners, which he co-founded.

Zamora, successful banker and businessman, is daughter to Carlos Zamora who gave architect Formoso his first break: the Riviera Night Club and the Sky View Hotel.

Consunji is a former public works secretary and founder of DMCI, the top construction company whose many projects were designed by Formoso.

Ayala is chair of the Mandala Island, which was designed by Formoso.

Gonzalez, nephew of the late architect, is the foundation's legal counsel. Father to Formoso is the foundation's acting president. He and his sisters, Irene Formoso-Dakila and Ma. Belinda Formoso-Quintana, are the three surviving children of the late great architect.

Gabriel P. Formoso is widely considered a pioneering figure in modern architectural design. The BS Architecture graduate of the University of Santo Tomas helped change the landscape of Philippine design.

His dream had always been to promote the architecture as a noble profession. He helped scientific his dream instead of scholarships for the poor. He had in fact given Architecture scholarships to his alma mater, UST.

With the establishment of the Gabriel P. Formoso Foundation Inc., his dream is on its way to becoming a reality.

Re-viewing Rizal

From page C6

ner here as early as 1898, just a few years after his death. A picture shows that it is a Rizal monument without the usual statue. Perhaps there was no sculptor around to make one.

Imo tells me there is also an early statue of the hero in the town of Biana in Laguna. The statue has entered a later date but it refers to a more remote building. The original monument was of wood much much earlier.

Local tradition maintains that one of the local boys ran off to Mindanao. So because Rizal's student is sculptors while the hero was in exile in Dapitan.

These examples make it clear that our people, very early on, already recognized the heroism of Rizal. They early on, they were already raising monuments to his honor.

I couldn't help thinking about our new monuments, our new sculptures. Do they have monuments to honor Rizal? Of course, our many parks and that we have many other heroes aside from Rizal. So, we can still ask, do our new subdivisions have any monuments to heroes? Perhaps the reason why some of our new subdivisions have such monuments is because they have very little images of our country's wonderful history. Just think what our young people are missing.

For questions and comments, e-mail bencampbell@philippinedaily.com.ph or address letters to Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Ave., ayala Triangle, Makati City.

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